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FRED HAZLE; Or, Adrift on a Floating Island. By H. C. EMMET.



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Fred Hazle; or, Adrift on a Floating Island.

By H. C. EMMET.

CHAPTER I.

WHEREIN HANGS A TALE.

SOME women are cruel from ungovernable passion, and wreak their vengeance on the weak and inoffensive for real or fancied wrongs, received from those on whom they can't resent it.

Such a woman was Mr. Susan Sulky. Childless herself, she had no sympathy for children, old or young, and it was an unhappy day for pretty Fredrica Hazle when she was left alone in the world with no one to look to but this gaunt, unfeeling tyrant, and she did look to her pretty often, but always with dread.

No wonder then if, after years of harsh treatment, drudgery and abuse, she should now, at the age of sixteen, be a somewhat hardened and callous girl—strong and matured above her age.

Her redeeming qualities were—affection for children—susceptibility to kindness, and a strong sense of virtue that no amount of cruelty could undermine.

Towards the close of the day in question she was conscious of a storm brewing, and the storm burst when she resolutely confronted Mrs. Sulky in the garden attached to the house, as that lady returned after many hours' absence.

"What are you doing here?" and the voice and eye told Fredrica at once that something had gone wrong.

"I'm waiting for you. I told you this morning that I would not stay under your roof another day. I want my clothes you have hidden; they are not many, Heaven knows!"

"Your clothes? I wonder what you ever had?"

"A heart once, which you long ago turned into stone. The clothes are mine—give them to me."

"Jest you get into the house, now."

"I shall do no such thing until you comply with my request."

"What! you're going to turn upon me, eh? Get into the house!" with a gesture that implied a blow.

"I will not. It's been an inquisition quite long enough."

"You she-devil!" almost screamed Mrs. Sulky, throwing back her shawl, baring her scraggy arm and taking the girl roughly by the shoulders, attempted to drag her into the house.

Poor, outraged Fredrica had long since nerved herself for the contest.

"Take your hands off me!" she cried, fiercely; and in the struggle she struck the gaunt woman full in the face.

Her bonnet flew off and two false teeth flew out.

Fredrica's own beautiful auburn hair fell in massy clusters down her back, and this—always the touch spring to the woman's most vindictive jealousy—Mrs. Sulky clutched in both her powerful hands and dragged the deeply-wronged girl down with such utter ferocity that even she for the moment was staggered and bewildered.

In her frenzied and blind fury this woman's mind was shut to everything save one idea—that she wanted to get the girl in the house.

All human feeling had fled, she would have used the same brute strength and energy had she been pulling a tree down or dragging a refractory mule to some objective point.

Fredrica knew it, knew that this unreasoning brute had no more care for her than she had for the tree, or the refractory mule.

"Woman, if you are one!" cried Fredrica, livid now with pain and desperation. "Think of what you're doing. Let go my hair. Don't—don't, I say, goad me on to raising my hand against you. Let go my hair!"

"Oh, yes, I'll let go your hair; when I've got you in the house."

It was impossible for Fredrica to rise—she could do nothing but grasp her own hair close to the back of her head to prevent the tyrant pulling it out by the roots.

She tried hard not to give way, but at last she uttered a piercing scream.

"Mercy—help! Will no one take me from this woman?"

The suddenness—the intensity of the scream caused the heartless woman to relax her hold, and Fredrica fell back.

Then she raised herself on her elbow and so rested, panting as if her very lungs would burst.

Sulky stood over her like an ogress, never looking around as if expecting interference.

The house was isolated, and the distant neighbors were generally occupied in their own domestic brawls.

Yet the poor girl's cry had been heard.

A crouching figure peered through a crack in the fence—the figure of a young man—not over prepossessing; there was too-much droop in the shoulders, too much cunning in the lines about the straight mouth, too little forehead above the beetling brows for him to be prepossessing.

"At it again," he muttered. "Go it, Mother Sulky; Rica'll be

glad to come to me yet, if you only drive her to it. You shouldn't be so darned proud, my beauty, and I'd have took you from this long ago. Ah! that's it; get ready."

Fredrica, having gained breath, scrambled up and jumped back just in time to escape the woman's clutches.

She swiftly tied her lovely hair in a knot and then stood at bay.

All that was beautiful in her face was stamped out; her nostrils were dilated, her lips livid and blood speckled where she had bitten them; her face gray, dark blue rings around the eyes, and the eyes so dry and tearless that they seemed to grow red hot and emit sparks of fire.

"God hear me!" she said; "you brutal woman! This is the last day of this! If I had a weapon I think I would kill you!"

"You threaten me, do you?" cried Sulky. "Get into the house!"

"Never again, so help me Heaven—never!"

The devil must be ever present to put mischief in people's way. The moment Mrs. Sulky moved forward her foot kicked something before her.

It was a piece of old harness, a yard long; a formidable weapon in the hands of the gaunt woman.

"You dare use that upon me? Stand back, woman!" cried Fredrica, at the top of her voice.

"Yes; don't, Mrs. Sulky, don't," cried a voice; and the young man who had watched the previous struggle, leaped over the fence.

"You here, Uriah Braintree?" furiously snarled Mrs. Sulky. "Get out of this, or I'll serve you the same, and worse, you ill-looking thief!"

"Yes, you did it once, Mother Sulky, didn't you, eh?" answered Uriah, with a horribly indescribable look on his face.

"Keep back; now, girl, into the house."

"Never, you unwomanly savage!"

Then she bore down upon the ill-used girl, to whose side Uriah wriggled himself, but not to stand between them, only to hurriedly whisper:

"Take this, Rica; take it. I'll see you through."

Then all was a confused and dreadful chaos. Fredrica felt a blinding cut from the harness strap—was conscious of something being thrust into her hand which felt like a pistol.

Before she could scarcely realize it, or recover from the shock of the blow, there was a report. She felt a sudden numbness and tingling in her hand, which she opened with a cry.

Then she stood transfixed.

Mrs. Sulky had dropped the strap; had placed one hand to her breast; an awful rigidity came over her face, and with her eyes rolling, first from one to the other, she fell heavily to the earth.

"Don't let this be seen!" gasped the voice of Uriah, as he picked up the smoking pistol and handed it to Fredrica.

She understood all then, and recoiled with a shuddering gasp.

"I never did it!" she cried, facing him like a fury.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH APPEAR OUR HERO AND PORTQUARTER JACK.

"Hush!" said Uriah. "Come away—listen, Rica, listen."

There was a snake-like glitter in his eyes then.

"Nobody knows it but me. I'll hide this thing—I'll make it look as if it was tramps. You know how I loves you, Rica. Go over to my mother's house, and I'll follow—go by the lanes. *We can swear then as you was there when it was done—mother'll swear it.* Then all I want is for you to be my wife, Rica, an' we'll leave here."

The girl shuddered.

"Go, Rica—get, now, or nothing'll save you. I'll put things right."

The girl, too horror-stricken and bewildered to think, obeyed so far and fled towards the home of the Braintrees.

It was almost dark now, and few people were about, and those not near the by-lane she now took.

Presently she stopped with a gasp.

Some one was approaching.

She crouched down behind a large tree, and waited, peering out to see who the new-comer was.

Some one with a light and airy tread, who was smoking a cigar, and humming a nautical love ditty at one and the same time.

In the gloom she could only discern that the face was youthful, the attire nautical, the figure robust and strong.

As he drew nearer the ash fell from his cigar, and the lurid end threw a sudden reflection over his face, and a handsome one it was.

Fredrica uttered a cry, half terror, half joy.

"Will," she cried, stepping from her place of concealment; "Merrymac," and then with a sudden burst of ag-

ony, she went on, hoarsely: "Oh, God! too late—too late! If *you* had only been there!"

The young sailor stopped short, threw away his cigar, stepped back in the greatest wonder, then burst out:

"Fredrica—Rica, lass—what's this? What d'ye mean—what are you saying?"

"Oh, Will—Will!"

"It was well for her that she had tender memories for one friend. It was well for her that they had deepened by feasting on them in his long absence. It was well for her they brought her throbbing head to his shoulder, and it was better still for her that she burst into a flood of tears, or she would have lost her reason.

Not a word from Merrymac till the grief was over. Then he gently led her away to a secluded spot and heard her story.

She told it with dramatic force and the pathos of reality—told him of the many cruelties and sufferings that were the prelude to this fatal night.

"Will—Will!" she cried, "say you believe me—say you do. I never did it. I scarcely knew the pistol was in my hand, or what it was when it went off. The condition of Uriah's silence is that I marry him," with a shudder, and then she was on her knees with her face upturned. "Dear, good Will, I swear I tell the truth. Save me—save me from him—from— Oh, God! speak to me, Will."

"No more, Rica; only let me get at Braintree, that's all. The accursed villain," said Merrymac, between his teeth, at the same time taking the girl in his arms very gently.

"You must come home with me, Rica. I'll think as we go along what's to be done."

"Take me with you, Will. I could never escape Uriah now, unless I lost my hair, and changed my name to—to Fred."

"What. Then wait—let me think—you must be disguised. Well—well, any port in a storm like this, and any gear that'll weather the storm. We'll neither tack nor lay to. I'll let you into the house unseen; go to the help's room—she's out. I'll get everything for you, all ship-shape; and as to the old lady—why, you bet I'll outsail the dear old soul on any tack."

* * * * *

New York.

In a poorly-furnished room where lodgings were cheap, a lad sat with his head buried in his hands, on a table chiefly remarkable for its economy in wood.

His semi-sailor attire was evidently new, strong and serviceable.

His thick, auburn hair rolling in massy clusters about his ears and nape, would have charmed the eye of an artist.

He remained in this position until a knock came at the door.

"Come in," he said. "Ah, it's you, Will."

"Yes, Fred," replied Merrymac, as he entered. "Moping again, old fellow," and a sly twinkle brightened Will's dark blue eye.

"No—no, Will," and Fred jumped lightly to his feet.

They were a handsome pair, and Will Merrymac every inch a sailor.

"Say, old fellow," he said to Fred. "There's a big ship going out—I think to Australia—she'll carry passengers, sure, and will easily find room for a couple of boys."

"Will she sail soon?"

"Looks like it; but I must see the skip, or one of the officers. I know where the men hang around generally. If you'll come, we'll visit some of the places. It will help get your hand in to accustom yourself to the men of the sea."

"I'm ready, Will."

"All right, old fellow—let's make sail—it's getting too

dark to 'sit here," and Will, lighting a cigar, put on his cap, and they went out.

At first they walked aimlessly about. Then as it grew later, Will said:

"We'll tumble in here, Fred; from the sounds I should say there's a lot of 'em preparing for a cruise. They generally racket a night or two before."

The saloon they entered was crowded nearly with sailors, 'longshoremen, stevedores, and the usual parasites who hang around.

It was impossible to see who were at the tables, and for a moment Fred was blinded with smoke.

"Come over here," said Will. "I think I see some one I know."

"Oh, Will! look, in Heaven's name!"

"What?"

"Uriah—he is coming this way!"

"Get out by that other door—turn quickly, and hurry to your room—I'll follow."

Uriah had entered, and was looking around him—staring from table to table—scanning every face that was visible to him until his eyes caught sight of Merrymac's.

His beetling brows lowered then—the cunning lines about his mouth hardened into cruelty and hate.

"Say, Merrymac, I want you; sit down here. I've been looking for you."

"That's more trouble than I'd take for you."

"Maybe so—look here—where've *you* hidden her?"

The look of innocence our hero possessed was simply lovely.

"Hidden who?"

"Rica."

Will laughed.

"Better look in my waistcoat pocket."

"Don't fool me, you thundering sea cub, I'm no boy. You'd better tell. I knows you was on the road that night. I knows you took her to your mother's house; course she denies it, but I *knows* it. What did you do with her? I don't intend to let yer go. I'll foller yer night and day. I'll foller on board ship. I'll never leave yer till I finds out. D'ye think I don't mean it?"

There was no room for any such doubt—none whatever. Will looked him square in the face, and knew that the despicable hound meant it.

"You can do as you please; go to the devil. I don't know what you're talking of."

"You lie, you thief; what's this?" and with a rapid movement of his hand, he pulled out of Will's breast a beautifully plaited chain, constructed out of *auburn hair*, with Mrs. Merrymac's portrait attached.

"Robber! what do you mean?" cried Will, leaping up; and, striking Uriah full in the face, knocked him down.

"Hold him!" roared Uriah, staggering up, and two rough loafers laid hold of our hero.

"Hands off me!" he cried, fiercely, and there was an uproar.

Amongst the men who jumped up was a good-looking, brawny old sailor, and he glared around, spoiling for a fight.

The moment he saw our hero he uttered a warning yell.

"Avast there, ye land-lubbers, Portquarter Jack's got a word ter say in this; no one lays hands on taut Will Merrymac while I'm a-by; stave in my portquarters if ye do."

CHAPTER III.

SENT TO SEA IN A ROTTEN SHIP.

"WHAT cheer, lad—what cheer, my hearty—got inter squalls, eh?" cried the huge sailor, shouldering his way through the crowd as easily as if he were walking through a cornfield.

"Halloo, one on his beam ends, eh?" with a broad grin as he took our hero by the hand—the two men having

dropped him like a red hot coal at the sound of the old tar's voice.

"Glad to see you, Jack!"

"Ay—ay, lad! I learned ye to tie the first lubber's knot, and don't ye forget it. What's the muss?"

In the midst of this excitement Uriah had crawled away, and sneaked out.

"I'll watch you, though—guess it's easier to watch two than one;" and he hung around the house with the exits in full view two hours or more, when he sneaked up to the door, and peered in. He had watched every one who had came out. What was his baffled rage when he found that not only Will, but the big sailor was gone.

What mystified him is simply enough explained.

The sailor who had so quaintly proclaimed himself Port-quarter Jack, had a bed in this very saloon, and had gone up to pack his "duds," as he was to go abroad next day.

"So ye hain't shipped, Will?" he said, while he was performing the packing operation.

"Not yet, Uncle Jack."

"Ay—ay, that's it; I likes to hear that ole name agin," he interrupted. "Where did ye ship for last?"

"Brazils; is your ship full?"

"Guess not, an' she's bound for a voyage that ain't of'en taken from this port."

"The *Andromeda*?"

"Stave my portquarter, how d'ye know that?"

"I went aboard to-day. Uncle Jack, can you put in a word for me, and I want to tell you, a young cousin of mine, he's got no home, and mother can't afford to keep him, and I——"

"Avast a bit, lad, avast, heave to. That's enough, Port-quarter Jack ain't the kind o' kitten to let a youngster make a home o' the streets if there's a way to help him. I'm a bo's'n o' the *Andromeda*, so," commencing to bel-low forth:

"Ye land-lubbers, lie down below—be-low—below! And the land-lubbers lie down below."

"Now, Will, get that cousin o' yours, and stay aboard to-night; we'll see the skipper in the morning, an' there's just a bottle of grog in the locker."

This set Will thinking of Uriah's vehement threat; he dared not say that the man who raised the disturbance was the cause of his hesitation.

"I'll send," he said, "to Fred, and go over with you."

"Needn't go at all yet," responded jolly old Uncle Jack, and he went on packing.

Thus the time went, and for the time Uriah was baffled, but not beaten.

"Merrymac 'll hang about with that sailor, an' I guess it'll be easy to find out where *he* ships."

A few drinks among the few remaining customers, a few questions adroitly put, and Uriah discovered that the boatswain had shipped on the *Andromeda*, and that he would most likely go on board on the morrow.

"I'll have her," he hissed, "if I have to nab him on the charge of hiding Rica to defeat the law. I can save her on an allyby afterwards. I'll have you, whelp, Merrymac—you've stood in my way there ever since you was a cub of twelve."

Vindictiveness has much patience, and this human rat burrowed in every available nook and corner for two days until he knew that the hour had come for all hands to be aboard the tender, and still Will did not show up.

The human rat gnawed his grimy thumbs. Had he been baffled after all? Had his enemy not shipped?

"But I'll find him. I'll have him—I'll—ugh—at last."

The vicious look of triumph that lit up the evil face of this human rat made it horribly repulsive.

Will with his canvas bag on his shoulder came trudging toward the wharf, where the boat was waiting, whistling softly.

He was alone, save for a lovely young lady who followed very hurriedly, leading a little boy by the hand. Just as

Uriah was about to step forward, she reached our hero and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Is this the pier for the *Andromeda*?" she asked, hurriedly.

"Yes, madame. The boat's here."

He was startled by the beauty, and the wild, anxious look that scarcely marred that beauty by its pallor.

At sight of this lady, one of the men leaped ashore to assist her. It was Portquarter Jack.

Scarcely had this lady and the child embarked, than Will was conscious of two shadows sandwiching him.

"Caught at last!" hissed Uriah, grasping our hero by the shoulder, and his companion did the same.

Will jumped clear of them with a cry of defiance that startled the old boatswain, and leaped around.

There was a tussel, a cry, a few oaths, a leap into the water, and the boat pushed off.

* * * * *

The *Andromeda* was out at sea five days, and the people began to know each other. The passengers numbered six females, including a colored servant of the mysterious young lady with the little boy, and who was known as Topsy Turvey.

The crew was a large one, and there were some rough characters.

A word to you, my young friends. Life on board ship, in the merchant navy, is not all that fancy paints it. Four-fifths of the crew are strangers to each other, and the fifth are generally at logger-heads with each other through private jealousies.

The men stow whatever they can take off, when not on duty, under their pillows. As an old sailor once said to me when I remarked upon their mutual mistrust:

"Why, sir, you don't know nothing yet. They'd steal the nose off yer face if it was a wax un; an' as ter searchin', that's all well enough in the reg'lar navy, but on these traders it 'ud go the round while yer was a searchin', and yer'd 'ave ter keep it up till doom's day and one day arter."

Let me give you another anecdote, a truth that I can swear to, and which is one in twenty thousand, of how boys are treated, at times, in the merchant ships. A little fellow, for some trifling offense (more likely to afford brutal amusement to some of the crew) had his fingers forcibly dipped into a tar bucket, and then one of the savages set light to them.

The matter was investigated; all swore ignorance, and said it was the boy's own act.

Imagine, then, the horror of poor Fredrica, or Fred, henceforth, when, after four days' sickness, she discovered on the fifth that—Will Merrymac was not on board.

Thank Heaven, from her ignorance of nautical matters, she was deputed to cabin work only, and made such a capital assistant to the stewardess, that she was spared being in the forecabin with the men.

On the evening of the fifth day Fred came on deck, and met Portquarter Jack.

"Uncle Jack?"

"Halloo, lad; why, stave in my portquarter, I thou't you was Willy."

"I want to ask you about—my—cousin."

"Why, d'ye see, Hazle—darned high-toned name that—arter you comed aboard, we went back fur some passengers as well as he. He were all but in the boat w'en he's nabbed. I knocks one feller inter the water—sneaking sorter cuss, with no more forehead than a monkey, an' was agoin' fur t'other one w'en he shows a blamed perlice shield. 'I wants him,' says he, a grinnin' to the crown of his head at t'other fellers going overboard. 'So do we,' says I; 'can't come,' says he; 'he's wanted ter give evidence about concealin'—Halloo! wat's ther matter; ain't a-goin' ter shoot the cat again?'"

"No, Uncle Jack, only the ship lurched then——"

"—Concealin' of a gal—a Re—Ree—Reeka——"

Fred gasped and nearly choked.

"—Reeka—Sulky (the name Fredrica had gone by) as was wanted. It's no hurt ter him; he'll be on the next ship, as I says once when I knocked a Barbadian pirate overboard." Then lowering his voice. "Fred, lad, I'm glad he ain't here, and I'm sorry I was the cause o' puttin' you aboard. Things is wrong. Yes, stave my portquarter, things is wrong," and he rolled it out as though he liked it.

"W—— what do you mean, sir?"

"Avast now—my Willy ain't here—but just sail right ahead and call me Uncle Jack."

"Uncle Jack."

"Sounds pleasant like," then lowering his voice again, "the men smell a rat, tho' there's none aboard, 'cause why—they always desert a rotten ship—boy, keep yer eyes open and yer mouth shut, 'cept ter me. I'll see after ye, lad, but," in a whisper, "we're sent ter sea ter founder."

"Bo's'n."

"Ay—ay, sir!" then aside to Fred as he passed aft, "thet's Captain Barpole's voice," adding to Portquarter Jack in personæ, "and be d—— to him."

"Bo's'n, what's the meaning of this?" cried Captain Barpole, holding out a sheet of paper on which was written a "Round Robbin," the name given to a protest, and in which the men sign their names in a circle, so the captain cannot tell who was the *first* to sign it.

"Don't know sir. Wot is it?"

"Come closer, you beggar—the men are complaining of their rations."

Jack knew all about it, but put on a look that would have graced innocence herself.

"Is they, sir?"

"Pipe all hands on deck."

The bo's'n's whistle was at his mouth in a moment, a prolonged and shrill call, and the men tumbled up like a swarm of bees.

Captain Barpole was a man of immense size, with a massive and stern face, harsh and unrelenting.

"What do all you beggars mean by this?"

Perfect stillness throughout the ship.

"I don't expect an answer; now, my men, look at me; do I look like a man who will stand any fooling?"

Perfect stillness throughout the ship still.

"Now you've signed articles, I know what's right, let me hear another murmur from any one and I'll knock the—head off his shoulders and put half of you in irons. I'm master here, don't forget it, my lads, or I'll make the *Andromeda* a floating hell. Bo's'n, pipe all hands down."

From that hour a gloom fell upon the ship; on deck the man worked like specters, in dead silence. Below, they conversed in whispers.

Time went on. Matters grew worse—so did the weather; all topsails and staysails were down, and the *Andromeda* began to plunge and roll fearfully.

Fred was on deck, holding on near the mainmast. The men were at the wheel.

Presently an officer in the fore yelled out:

"Something right ahead. Hard a starboard!"

"Hard a starboard it is, sir," replied the quartermaster, at the wheel.

"Hard a starboard!" repeated the officer, and the reply was the same.

"My God!" exclaimed the second mate, as the captain rushed on deck. "She won't answer her helm, sir!"

"No," muttered a man who passed him; "her stern post is rotten!"

"Pipe all hands to brace the yards!" said the captain, cool as a bucket in an ice well.

The call was given.

Not a man, save the watch on deck, showed up.

"What does this mean?"

And now the skipper's voice was a lion's roar.

"The men refuse to turn up, sir."

"Mutiny, by God!" he thundered, dashing forward with the intention of going into the forecabin.

But he never reached the hatchway.

There was a loud report as of a cannon, away went the jib in tatters, the ship trembled from stem to stern, and keeled over. The waves broke across her deck in mountains, and poured down into the lower decks in a deluge.

The men tumbled up then. The women passengers, as well as the men, swarmed up the hatchways screaming in horror, amid oaths and curses and a wild rush and confusion.

Fred had been thrown down, and would have gone overboard but for the timely hand of Portquarter Jack.

So frightful was the fall of blinding spray now, that it seemed to shower down from the heavens.

The captain shouted through his speaking-trumpet to the men to cut away the mizzen mast.

Scarcely had he removed the trumpet from his lips than the vessel arose, amidst a din of grinding, crushing and grating, as if it were being carried to the very Heavens, and lay over on her side.

The scene was a harrowing one; strong men were hurled into the sea like corks.

"Into the rigging!" cried Barpole.

"Into the rigging!" shouted Hazle, powerful as a young lion in the hour of need, and forcibly taking the mysterious young lady into the main ratlines, while the roar and booming of the sea deepened the horrors of this appalling night.

What was the dawn of day to see?

CHAPTER IV.

PHENOMENAL—FIRE FROM OUT THE SEA.

THE fortitude human nature is capable of, powerlessly at the mercy and the will of Providence, was shown in those two disastrous wrecks, the U. S. steamer *Huron* and the *Metropolis*.

When the first shock of horror was over—when it was seen that the vessel seemed a fixture, and nothing worse than heavy showers of spray dashed over her, they became resigned if not hopeful.

All complaints ceased; manhood stepped in and stopped blasphemy among the sailors.

The women, always more silent than men under heavy affliction, became calm, and now could be heard the cheery voice of Portquarter Jack.

"You all right up there, marm?"

"Yes—yes; but Edgar, my boy——"

"I've got him, God love his eyes, and he hain't cried out once—and Fred, lad?"

"All right, Uncle Jack," answered Hazle.

"He's taking care of me, and God bless you for minding my darling," cried the lovely young mother, who had been dubbed the "widow" on no other authority than appearances.

The same salutations could be heard among the sailors.

"Abaft there!" cried Captain Barpole.

"Ay, sir!" answered Ingram, the chief mate.

"Ay—ay, sir!" from Cassidy, second officer, and chorus from the greater portion of the crew.

"Can any of you see land?"

The men in various parts of the stern and mizzen rigging—especially those able to look over the stern bulwark—peered into the foam-speckled water, and reported:

"Shallow—a shallow!"

"Then," said Captain Barpole, "we're on a sunken reef. How in thunder did it get here? There should be a depth that no cable could reach."

The wind lulled rapidly, or more properly speaking, the gale swept on its devastating course, leaving the still angry sea lashing against the ship's side, and occasionally lapping the masts half way up.

No one ventured to shift from their comparatively safe positions.

At times the vessel rocked as if lifted by a rising tide, but sinking again without any sound of grating on reef or land, and still for all that she remained a fixture.

Fortunately for the passengers, their ignorance prevented them attaching any importance to this, but to the captain, officers and crew, it had an ominous significance that awed them into gloomy silence.

Not a man on board had ever before had such an awful experience of shipwreck.

By-and-by the sea ceased to sweep the sloping deck, and only the frothy spray burst in showers over her, and the helpless creatures growing cramped and fatigued on the reeking rigging.

How the men strained their eyes across the blackened, liquid hills for the first sign of dawn, and the women prayed for day.

Presently, when both sea and wind had lulled, and hearts beat high in faint hope, there arose a plaintive howl, such a mixture of the unreal and the human, that it chilled the blood of all who heard it.

"Mein Gott!" cried a voice in the fore rigging, "what you want now? Why you goes and howl for now, mein poor tog?"

"Say, Fritz, you lubber, chuck that derved animal over."

"Heave him into the sea, you son of a sausage," cried another; the men looked upon this manifestation of the unhappy dog with superstitious awe.

But the shivering Teuton clung to his mongrel pet, and held his mouth, fearing the wrath of those above and below him, if poor Yowler should give any further vent to his feelings.

Towards daylight the captain scrambled aft, and joined his officers.

"Still no signs of land?"

"No, sir."

"What can it mean?"

"Don't know, sir," answered the second mate, Cassidy, who for hours had been intently watching the stars. "But I'll stake my life on it we're drifting."

"Drifting?" cried the captain, loudly, and with a mirthless laugh. "Have you lost your senses, man?"

"Look at the compass, sir."

The captain went to the compass, the only place where a light still burned, though dimly.

Even he checked a burst of blasphemy then.

"Drifted by G——!" he exclaimed, thunder-stricken.

The word soon passed, they were wedged upon something that held them like a giant vise, and still drifting.

The blood curdled in the men's veins. They made no demonstrations. Silence among men speaks far more eloquently than words at times. This was one of those times.

Inertia set in among them like an epidemic. Not one man made an effort to shift his position to see what he could do for himself.

The voice of the captain was unheeded. All that was looked for now was daylight, that their position might be revealed.

Once little Eddie Elmhurst, the "widow's" boy, cried out: "Mama!" once more the irrepressible Yowler set up a prolonged and plaintive howl, one, and only one, of the men, faint from terror and exhaustion, gave vent to a deep, quivering cry, and fell from high up in the rigging, crossing the slanting deck and striking inside the port ratlins, rebounded to the deck, and after rolling into the lee scuppers, lay still as death.

Nobody noticed him; but little Eddie's cry reached ears that nothing but the deadening crack of doom could deafen.

"My love—my life!" cried the mother. "I am here,

stay where you are, darling, strong arms hold you, a powerful breast shields you."

The silence and the gloom of the dark hour before dawn, and when at last the margin of grey twilight arose above the eastern hemisphere, haggard eyes turned towards it, and a glad cry burst from parched lips that had been sealed for many hours.

A white speck was discerned.

"A sail—a sail!" and they even held out their hands, unconsciously beckoning it towards them.

But it lingered only a few minutes in sight, then dipped back into the grey light, and disappeared.

You could hear then the vast united sigh that roamed throughout the ship, and the weary eyes were turned nearer home.

To behold what?

A huge, conical-shaped black column rising astern of them—to behold sulphurous jets of flame darting from the bubbling water on all sides of them.

Had a shapeless demon arisen from the fathomless depths, bringing with it the fires of Hades?—was the world swinging blackened in the air and about to burst asunder?

The awful phenomenon caused the stoutest-hearted to blanch to the lips, and for a time the captain stood dumb and amazed.

"Bo's'n," called he at last.

"Ay—ay, sir."

"Down with you and pipe all hands on dack. Quarter-master, heave the lead and take soundings."

"Gimme de boy, Massa Jack," cried Topsey Turvey, who had no intention of leaving the rigging.

"Don't leave me, Freddy," said the lovely Mrs. Elmhurst. "My feet are tortured with those dreadful strings I am standing on; I should fall if you let go, good Freddy you have the strength of a man, and—and the gentleness of a woman."

Hazle colored, but answered:

"No, madame, I will not leave you till you can be taken down in safety."

The heavings of the lead showed only six feet of water under the stern, and fourteen at the bow. The log was heaved, and then the horror and astonishment was increased.

They were drifting at the rate of a mile and three-quarters an hour.

"Look—look?" cried Fred, pointing to the great irregular column that was rising out of the water still higher, and as the two other shiny and blackened oblong and jagged protuberances became visible amidst fresh bursts of sulphurous flame—a dull and vibrating rumbling and hissing.

"To the starboard rigging all of you!" shouted the captain. "Help the women, quick!"

But his voice was drowned in the appalling shrieks of the females, the cries of the men, and the pitiful howling of Yowler.

The vessel arose higher and higher, rocked slightly, and then with a frightful deliberation of motion began to lay right over as an appalling cry went up:

"We're capsizing!"

CHAPTER V.

WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR HERO.

"Pick up your kit," said the private clothes officer, as Uriah Braintree came floundering out of the dirty river.

"Not me," answered Will, with more force than grandeur.

"What do you mean?"

"I carried it here, and I'd carry it on board; but if you want to carry me along, you'll have to carry that along, too."

"Then I'll leave it."

"I wouldn't. There may be something in it you'll want."

"Say, you!" the officer turned to the dripping Uriah, and Will laughed in spite of his wretched feelings at the sneak's plight.

"What d'ye want?"

"Bring that along, and hurry up, or you'll catch cold."

"I ain't the prisoner," snarled Uriah.

"Your turn will come some day," laughed Will; then to the officer: "He looks like the first man who came out of the ark, don't he? Ha-ha! he's wet enough;" and Will strolled on with the officer by his side, leaving Uriah—the center of attraction in a grinning crowd—to pick up our hero's bag.

"My!" yelled a street Arab; "say, see the feller wot couldn't pay his washing woman, an' jist tried to wash hisself all at once."

"Tally—ee—grin five o'—Yah, wot ar' yer been a-looking for at the bottom of the river?" yelled another.

This was only a prelude to what followed, and never was police station more welcome to human rats than it was to Uriah Braintree.

"I don't know why I'm brought here, sir," said Will, respectfully to the captain. "But it's lost me my ship, and one ain't got every day."

"What's he been doing?" asked the captain.

"Nothing, sir; I can swear to that."

"Silence!"

"This feller," said the officer, with a contemptuous gesture towards Uriah, "says he can give information of the whereabouts of that girl who's wanted over in Jersey—Fredrica Sulky."

"Well, my lad," said the captain, kindly, "I can do nothing but send you up before the magistrate in the morning. When does your ship sail?"

"She's under weigh now, sir."

"Sorry for you. Been to sea long?"

"Nearly five years, sir."

"Ah!" philosophically. "You'll get a ship easier than most boys."

Then he turned to Uriah.

"You wish to appear?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Ah! why have you taken this step? What do you know of William Merrymac?"

"Knowed him before he went to sea."

"Captain," said Will, "he's done this out of pure spite. I knocked him down the other night because he laid his hands on a chain that bears my mother's locket."

"With attempt to steal?"

"No, sir," replied Will. "I don't think he's got pluck enough for that."

Will thought the captain looked disappointed.

"Take Merrymac down—needn't shut his cell—give him a seat in the corridor—and take the other—better keep him too—it will give him a chance to dry his clothes."

Then, with a hidden smile and significant nod, he dismissed them.

Now he had said nothing about Uriah's cell door being left open, and the officer, with an instinctive dislike for Uriah, shut him up, while Will had free run of the passages between the cells, and was told that he could smoke, and if he wanted anything now or in the morning, he could get it by paying for it.

So far the rat got the worst of the bargain.

The night's stay here would have had no effect upon Will had he not suffered great mental anxiety about Hazle.

"Poor Fred!" he thought, unconsciously using the abbreviation of the name; "what will she do when she finds herself alone? Thank Heaven Uncle Jack will take care of her, for my sake; we may never meet again. Why did

I encourage her in this fatal step? and yet it was the only thing for her salvation."

So he went into court with his lips sealed.

The judge seemed puzzled at the strange nature of the case.

"The officer exceeded his duty," he said, severely. "This lad had no right to be forcibly taken from his ship on such a flimsy pretext. He is discharged at once, and I only hope that he may still find means of overtaking his ship; she may not have passed Sandy Hook yet."

"Thank you, sir," said Will, gratefully. "But I don't think there's a chance now; she was to be towed out with a tug."

"And he left the court sad at heart, in spite of his triumph. Uriah would have left the court, too, at his heels, when the voice of the judge stopped him.

"I wish you to understand," he said, "that if you molest William Merrymac in any way that puts a restraint upon his personal liberty again, I shall hold you under bonds for your good behavior."

Uriah turned blue with chagrin, and slunk out, perfectly aware of the fact that he had not only had much the worst of it, but that he had run close upon getting into danger.

Will was in a quandary; he had received an advance of pay from the agent who had shipped him on board the *Andromeda*, and of course had spent it on Fred's outfit and his own.

He had not enough money left to get dinner with. If he went anywhere, he would have to leave his kit as security.

He felt utterly wretched, and the thought of the separation from Hazle made him sick.

"I know what I'll do," he thought, "I'll go back to the judge, and ask him if I can't have a paper to show that I've been arrested. Then I'll see the owner."

He left his luggage at a saloon, went back to the court, and stated his case. The judge sympathized, but could do nothing.

"I might help you with a trifle out of my own pocket—"

"Thank you, judge, I don't want that. I've got a good watch and chain, and I can raise money on my outfit; but I'm afraid of the agent taking me up for breach of contract."

The judge said to the clerk of court:

"Give this lad a formally written discharge to show his employers."

And Will, so far, left the court happy.

Next he went to the owners of the *Andromeda* and saw the principal, Mr. Medfield.

There was another gentleman present, dressed in dark blue, the coat being double-breasted, and closely buttoned. On the table by his elbow rested his high silk hat.

There was nothing in his attire to denote his calling, but the quick eye of our hero detected the sailor beneath the sober civilian garb, and detected it the moment his eyes caught a glimpse of the sun-tanned throat, hand, and wrist.

He was a handsome fellow, and eyed Will with some interest, listening, too, very attentively to what he had to say.

"I have no other ship," answered Mr. Medfield, "likely to sail for months. The *Aurora* sailed a week ago."

"*Aurora*, sir? I sailed in her sixteen months—she was put in dock condemned as unseaworthy."

"You seem to have a good memory, my lad," answered Medfield, apparently ill-pleased. It does not follow that she was beyond repair."

"No, sir; not at all."

"I can do nothing for you, and shall give orders to my agent to be more careful in future who he ships."

This stung our hero.

His face reddened and his eyes flashed.

"It was not my fault, sir—I've first-class certificates from four masters already, sir—you shall see them if you will. If I was a little older, I could ship as an able-bodied seaman—as to the advance, your agent shall have that, sir, I've got a watch and——"

"What's your name, my lad?" put in the other gentleman, who had been humming softly to himself.

"Merrymac, sir."

"Well, Merrymac, wait outside for me till I can come, and you shall have the advance pay you drew."

Mr. Medfield frowned, but the gentleman laughed and resumed his cigar.

"You are liberal, Captain Day," sneered Medfield.

"Fault I had in my youth, Uncle John."

There was a hidden sarcasm of mockery in that "Uncle John" that made the old gentleman wince.

"You can go, lad. Wait in the outer office," said Captain Day; and Will, with a thrill of gladness, backed out.

"He's a character," thought Will. "Capt'n what of, navy or army? Gentleman, I'll swear."

He was doubly convinced of this when the stalwart Captain Day strode out, graceful and erect, with his close-cut blonde beard glinting in the sun, and his heavy moustache waving like feathers.

"Follow me, Merrymac," he said, courteously; and Will followed.

Captain Day turned up from the river into Fulton street. By St. Paul's he stopped.

"I forgot," he said, "you want some money. Here, take this, settle your affairs and meet me at the New York hotel at six, sharp. You'll be there?"

"No fear, sir; long before that."

"Good!" and Captain Day passed on.

Will, without counting the money, placed it in his breast, and had made a half turn, when a voice grated out:

"You're in blamed luck, you are. Is that *the price Rica fetched yer?*"

Will made the other half turn, and confronted Uriah Braintree.

Our hero's flesh began to creep from his heels to his scalp at the infamy of this vile accusation.

"Debased foul-mouthed beast!" he spluttered out, chokingly, and regardless of consequences, he struck the human rat down as if he had been felled by the ax of a slaughterer.

He saw the folly and the danger of his act then.

CHAPTER VI.

A ROUND ROBIN, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

"PRAY for courage, madame—pray for it," cried the voice of Fred, throwing his body flat against Mrs. Elmhurst, and so holding her against the rigging.

The ship lying on her port side had placed Hazel and the rest of those on the port rigging almost in the water.

"I will—I will!" gasped the suffering young creature.

"Oh, my boy—my——"

"Hazel," bellowed Portquarter Jack, from the starboard, "look out for this line; lash the lady to it. D'ye hear?"

"Ay, I hear."

The boy coiled up one of the starboard main sheer's, and dexterously threw it over, but Fred dared not let go his hold, and after feeling the rope play around his head it fell off, and trailed in the sea.

Nearly the whole weight of Mrs. Elmhurst was upon him, while the water dashed over him, keeping him pretty well submerged.

At this moment every soul on board thought their last hour was come.

The ship trembled from stem to stern, her masts shivered and creaked; there was a vast commotion beneath her, the black column began to sink again, the sulphurous flames burst out afresh, and at the moment destruction

seemed inevitable, and every eye was closed, the *Andromeda* slid till her port bulwark ploughed up the water, became stationary, and with a majestic upward swing of the masts, she *righted!*

For full five minutes an awful stillness reigned. The pent-up agony of the last half hour deprived the sufferers of the mental power of realizing what had happened, and when they did, and the cry went up: "*Saved—saved!*" there came a shocking incident.

One poor fellow, whose mind was not capable of bearing the shock, gave vent to a blood-curdling laugh, and following it up with the shriek of a maniac, fell from the fore-top to the deck with a sickening thud—bereft of his reason!

The men, trembling in every limb, now did not stand long inactive. The women were taken out of the rigging and conveyed to the saloon; Fred staggered down as if under the influence of drink, and while the carpenters were set to work to examine the ship, and the sail-makers the rigging, the rest of the company soon fell to at their respective duties, and then Captain Barpole turned his attention to the strange rock on which they had come to grief.

"Lower a boat," he said. "I must examine that," and he hurried down to get his chart.

The boat was lowered, but not one of the men in it would venture to put a foot on the rock, around the edges of which still burst the volcanic flames, while the rock itself was sinking rapidly*, and at two o'clock in the day not a sign of the island was to be seen.

The *Andromeda* had received considerable damage to her rigging and spars, to some of the deck-houses, but most below the water-line astern.

The stern post had been shaken and was displaced, leaving the vessel entirely beyond control, and there was a trifling leakage whose source could not be discovered yet.

Should the weather become rough again, nothing could save them unless a vessel providentially came to their assistance.

It was a gloomy outlook, and the present broken-spirited condition of the men made them morose and despondent.

Breakfast was the first consideration, then Captain Barpole ordered an allowance of grog to be served out all around.

The men brightened a little.

The wind fell and the water became calm.

The captain ordered the cargo in the hold aft to be shifted forward, so that the stern might rise and let the carpenters get at the stern post.

This was done, when towards sunset a steamer was discerned in the offing.

"Shall we signal her, sir?" asked the men.

"No," was the cruel and inexplicable answer; "to your work, everyone of you, or by——I'll see who's master here."

The men gathered forward in sullen silence, leaving their respective duties, and exchanging glances that the captain would have done well to heed had he seen them.

Most of the passengers were below, not yet recovered from the prostration brought about by the night's horrors.

But the news of the near approach of a steamer—homeward bound, it was reported—gave them hope-born strength, and they clustered on the deck.

The steamer's spars were clearly outlined by now, and the hull began to rise slowly, a proof that she was nearing the crippled *Andromeda*.

*This is no wild flight of imagination. As late as the end of 1877 a captain of a Danish sailing vessel met a similar volcanic "island" off Terre del Fuego in lat. 65 S., lon. 75 W. No island was marked on his map, so he left the ship and visited this strange rock in a small boat. Its shape was almost conical, and very precipitous; and when one of the sailors attempted to land he leaped back as flames came from under his feet, and the sea around began to bubble and hiss. The island disappeared in a few hours. Another proof that truth is stranger than fiction.

Captain Barpole was secretly furious, and stood apart from the passengers, conversing with his chief officer, Ingram.

"Curse her! will she come too near?" he said.

"Looks as if she was bearing down, sir," replied Ingram, who shared his commander's anxiety.

"What are the men doing? Where are they, Mr. Cassidy?"

"Sir."

"What in thunder are the men doing? Are they skulking below?"

"Jest so, sir. They all disappeared pretty sharp."

"Bo's'n, call the watch up—look at that rigging."

Toot—toot—tee—oot, screeched the bo'sun's whistle. Presently the men in twos and threes came up, and went sullenly and lazily to work.

The captain watched them with a slumbering fury that would have found vent in violence had not the steamer been so near.

"Is the steamer coming to us?" asked Mrs. Elmhurst of Fred, who stood near.

"Can't say, ma'am; she's altering her course now—yes, she's making for us."

"Hold your tongue!" roared Barpole. "Get below, you insolent monkey, who the devil gave you permission to be oh the poop deck?"

Fred hurried away.

Mrs. Elmhurst winced. The language offended her refined ear. She turned her eyes full upon the captain.

"I detained him, Captain Barpole," she said, her lovely eyes humid. "I am to blame."

"Sorry, madame—don't allow boys on the poop," replied Barpole gruffly.

"Look—look!" cried some of the passengers, shading their eyes to better watch the steamer. "Signals—she signals."

"Quick, Ingram," whispered the captain, "you and Cassidy answer. Say we're all right, give the number, no assistance wanted, and be——to them."

The sailors began to crowd the deck, watching the preparations to signal.

At this moment the oldest hand on board came aft, and cap in hand, presented the captain with a double sheet of foolscap paper, closely covered with characters.

His face paled with rage when he read it.

The paper was a "round-robin," a document in vogue with sailors when they wish to protest against a wrong.

They write the protest in a circle, around the edge of that circle they write their names, so that it is impossible to discover who was the first to sign.

In this they respectfully submitted that the ship was no longer fit for the long voyage, and hoped the captain would signal the steamer, put the passengers on board of her, and let the *Andromeda* be taken in tow till her repairs were completed, when they would cheerfully work her back to port.

"Back to port!" hissed Barpole, glaring at the upturned faces of the crew, now all grouped around their delegate.

"May I know what this is, Captain Barpole?" asked Mrs. Elmhurst.

Barpole could not refuse her and the other lady passengers.

He read the document. They at once added their voices to that of the sailors.

Then Captain Barpole lost his patience, and reminded them that law made him an autocrat on the high seas.

"Ladies, I neither require teaching my duty nor to be reminded of my responsibilities. You will please retire to the saloon, or your cabin. Mr. Cassidy, escort the ladies below."

There was no appeal against his despotic sway here. The ladies vanished, and the mustered crew began to look uneasily into each other's eyes.

Portquarter Jack was passing forward when Barpole stopped him.

"Stay where you are!" he said.

Then Barpole faced the crew. He was, as I have said, a big man, with a red beard and hair. He was not deficient in good looks, but when in a rage his face was terrible.

"Now, my men," he said, "you haven't sailed with me before, I suspect, or you would know me. You see that steamer has already put about. I signaled that her assistance was not wanted. Let this be an answer to the rest."

Ho tore the round-robin into shreds, and threw them overboard.

The men's faces blackened, and they still eyed each other. They were about to turn sullenly away, when his voice stopped them.

"I am going to take this ship to her destination," he said, forcibly, "and I'll do it, by ——! if I have to carry half of you in irons. Let me hear a murmur again, and I'll try what chains and darkness will do for you. If this ship is not in sailing trim by this time to-morrow, I'll take affairs in hand myself. To your work, all of you. Ingram, send the third officer forward to watch these dogs. Cassidy, keep the main deck watch. Ingram, see to the fixing of the stern post, and one and all of you as officers, I order you to blow the d—— head off the shoulders of the first man that rebels!"

There are some men who inspire fear in others, and Captain Barpole was one of them.

But the condition of things was ominous after this.

The officers walked the decks armed, the men worked in brooding silence. The rotten hulk was patched up, and leaks caulked; but every man on board knew what a frail barrier stood between them and eternity if the weather should become rough again.

Days dragged on into weeks, the men's murmurs grew worse than ever.

They remonstrated respectfully, and met with oaths and threats.

Then they held a caucus and sent delegates to the captain.

The captain clapped the delegates in irons, and imprisoned them in the lower hold.

The crisis came then.

Dinner hour arrived, and the men took the unwholesome food and threw it overboard.

Captain Barpole laughed.

"We won't waste good food," he said; "give them no more until they come to their senses."

Then the men barricaded themselves in the fo'c'sel, and refused to come out.

The captain, obstinate to the last, tried to work the ship with the aid of his officers, the warrant officers and Portquarter Jack and his mate.

Fred stood by the captain, and worked day and night.

But this could not last long, the calm was not likely to last forever; a change came even sooner than was expected.

The weather went with a jump from fine to dismal showers. The next day squalls set in, and they beat about almost helplessly.

The captain sent for the men. They told him to go to the devil, or else send food and grog. The captain was about to give in when he noticed the barometer rise, and the sun dispelled the mist. The thermometer stood at fifty-one degrees, and very fine weather returned.

This nonplussed the crew.

They called Portquarter Jack, told him to be spokesman, and see the captain.

He did so. The captain would listen to nothing but an unconditional surrender.

The men, driven to desperation, overturned the barricade, and walked on deck in a body.

The scene was an impressive one now.

"Silence!" roared Captain Barpole, to the bo's'n, who

was eloquently putting the grievance of the crew before him.

"Now, lads, I give you one minute to put down your weapons, and go to your duty."

The captain drew his revolvers, his officers did the same.

The passengers clustered on deck, and Mrs. Elmhurst tried to avert the awful danger.

In the midst of the excitement, and just as the men were about to march forward, little Eddie Elmhurst, who thought all this a performance got up for his special delectation, escaped from the shivering Topsy Turvey, and ran crowing in between the belligerents.

Mrs. Elmhurst screamed aloud.

"My child—my child! Oh, God, some one save him!" she implored, attempting to dash forward, but was restrained.

"A hostage—a hostage!" cried the men.

"Fire high, but mind the child!" thundered the captain, reckless of the consequences.

He did not see Fred scamper up the rigging, and climb out upon the main stay; no one saw him until he came sliding with fearful velocity down the halyard, as the order for fire was executed, and a piercing shriek that drowned even those loud reports, rang out as if it had been wrung from a heart stricken with death's agony.

CHAPTER VII.

A FIRE AT SEA.

THE imminent peril of Fred Hazle had caused Mrs. Elmhurst to utter that piercing shriek.

It startled the crew, and even Captain Barpole paled at having so nearly been the cause of the death of an innocent lad.

"Are you men?" cried out Hazle, snatching up the boy and turning almost fiercely on the crew. "Can you risk the lives of women and children at your mercy on the high seas?"

"Hazle, come out of that!" said Captain Barpole.

"Oh, sir!" cried Mrs. Elmhurst, taking advantage of this lull to rush in between the contending parties.

"Take the women below!" cried a voice from among the crew.

The men were fully aroused now, and intended to settle the differences at any risk.

The only one who but too well knew what the consequences might be, was the bo's'n.

Among a large mixed crew there would necessarily be some black sheep, and the danger to the women could not be overestimated.

"Cap'n Barpole," he said, "you know as how I've stood by you an' acted up ter ship's articles. For the sake of the women, cap'n, won't ye let this affair be settled like, without bloodshed?"

"Compromise," whispered Ingram to the captain. "We're getting into the tropics; we're bound to win in the end."

Captain Barpole looked sulky, but saw no way out of it.

"Ask them what the devil they want."

Ingram put the question. The answer was reasonable.

Proper rations, and the ship steered for the nearest port.

Captain Barpole smiled inwardly, and told the men to lay down their arms and go to their duty.

The men took this as a tacit acceptance of their terms, and yielded.

Captain Barpole left the deck, and the ship went on her doomed course.

After that the mate, Ingram, and the captain were frequently closeted together in the latter's cabin, secretly plotting, and openly drinking freely.

Fred Hazel's duties being confined chiefly to the cabins and saloons, saw more of this man than any one else, and his suspicions were at last aroused.

Time had passed, and the memory of the fearful night of danger and the mutiny had nearly died out, when he crept up to Portquarter Jack, who sat moodily cutting some plug tobacco in the shadow of the fore-castle main deck.

"Uncle Jack."

"Halloo, lad! why, stave in my portquarter, what's come o' ye o' late?"

"Been busy, Uncle Jack, like the rest."

"Ay—ay, sit ye down."

"You've been very gloomy, too, Uncle Jack; I never hear you singing now."

"Ain't much ter sing about, lad, as I knows on; the cap'n don't seem ter care whether we goes ter Davy Jones or no."

"He's always with the first officer whispering together, and——"

"Eh! An' wot?" asked Jack, in a thick whisper.

"They often go into the hold, and the captain's been packing up maps and valuables in his sea-chests."

The bo's'n paused with a plug of tobacco half way to his mouth, and opened his eyes.

"Go on, Fred, go on!"

"I heard the captain the other day say that he didn't like to do it with the women on board."

"Do wot?"

"I couldn't hear, Ingram always speaks like a cat purs."

"Ay—ay. He's a good lump o' a cat, too; heave ahead."

"Then he laughed and gave Barpole more drink, and then the captain swore and said he wished it was over. 'We'll wait,' he said, 'till we're outside the tropics.'"

Bluff old Jack's face paled.

"Out—side—the—tropics?" he said, slowly.

"Yes, then the mate said: 'We're four hundred miles away from the Island of Opara.'"

"Wat a' we got to do with that stone in the sea?"

"I don't know; but Captain Barpole seemed glad. 'All right,' he said, 'now's the time, and we'll make it hot enough for the crew, eh?' swearing and laughing as he does."

"Make it hot for the crew?" repeated Jack; wot does he mean—wot devil's work do they mean? Ay—ay! I'll keep a weather eye upon them, stave me if I don't. Halloo, it's late, and you'd better turn in. I've got to keep the middle watch to-night."

The night was a calm one, the air warm and dewy, a slight and unshifting breeze played over the deck, and even the watch dozed in cosy corners, while the remainder of the crew slept undisturbed in their berths below.

Night is very short in these latitudes; a mere shadow coming between the twilight of the closed day and the twilight of the coming morn.

Cassidy was on the poop, Jack chewing the cud of reflection, forward, mentally blessing Providence for giving them such weather, while their lives depended on a ship like the *Andromeda*.

"Stave in—wot! smoke, by thunder, or I'm dreaming!"

He went further forward—smoke in black clouds and like twisting snakes, came writhing and twirling up from below.

He hurried aft.

"Mr. Cassidy, sir, there's smoke coming up from below."

"Smoke! Send one of the men down to see what it is."

"Yes, sir."

The captain's words: "We'll make it hot for them!" recurred to him now, and his blood curdled.

"The gallows monster!" he muttered, ordering one of the men below to discover the cause.

"It's coming up the fore and main hatches," yelled the man, startled.

Jack repeated the cry.

"Pipe all hands, knock off the hatches, and rig the pumps!" cried Cassidy, leaving the deck.

Then arose cries of:

"Fire—fire!" in different parts of the ship, arousing passengers and officers alike.

The hatches were knocked off, a stifling cloud of smoke arose, followed immediately by a loud report and fierce flames that seemed to shoot up like solid blocks of fire.

The men were driven back terror-stricken and scorched. Then arose a din of confusion and panic baffling description.

Ingram rushed up on deck half dressed. As if he had not, long since, crept like a fire-fiend through the floor of the captain's cabin.

The captain roared to the men to save the boats forward and get them ready, telling the men that those "d—choked up squirts," meaning the pumps, were useless.

How the fire spread; the rotten ship, dried by the scorching sun, burnt like tinder, and in three minutes the men were the first to recognize the impossibility of saving the ship.

The women screamed, some fainted, while in her frenzy and terror of the devastating fire, Mrs. Elmhurst caught her boy and leaped, with a wild shriek, into the sea.

Fred, a courageous swimmer, saw her go, and without a thought, plunged in after her. But two lives are not easily saved.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MURDEROUS DEED.

URIAH BRAINTREE did not attempt to rise until he saw a policeman. He got up then with his evil face flushed with passion.

"I give this person in charge," he said.

"Oh, you do—do you, young fellow," was the startling response; "maybe you don't know me. I guess you were in court this morning; maybe you don't remember what the judge told you about molesting this 'ere young sailor chap—best thing you can do is to git or I'll help you along."

A few of the juvenile spectators grinned, for they have a largely developed sympathy for sailor boys, and Will Merrimac's handsome face and figure carried with them irresistible charm.

Uriah turned livid to the lips.

The policeman's face was familiar to him now. The court's warning recurred to him with more force than pleasantness, and without a word he slunk away, still, rat-like, gnawing at his nail, beaten once more in his vindictive attempt to compromise our hero.

Will Merrimac, having become the center of attraction, was glad enough to get away from the crowd. Duty with him was the thought uppermost in his mind.

He did his duty now. He had more time to spare than he cared for, and was hanging around the New York hotel a full hour before the appointed time.

He found Captain Day in company with a younger gentleman at the bar.

"Well, lad," he said, smiling kindly. "I see you know how to keep an appointment."

"I hope so, sir, especially as I think you made a mistake this morning. Are you aware, sir, that you gave me fifty dollars?—won't you let me return the change?"

Captain Day laughed good-naturedly.

"You were brought up in a school where honesty is the best policy," he said.

"There's nothing lost by that, sir."

Captain Day turned to his companion.

"This lad," he said, with more meaning than the word itself conveyed, "has been on your uncle's ships, Needham. He got into a little scrape, which I got him out of with my usual disinterestedness. I rather think that you

can trust him to help you in your affair to-night, or I am no judge of human nature."

"Hush, for God's sake!" said young Needham, casting an anxious glance behind him; "we must be careful whom we trust in my desperate condition."

"I don't see the desperation," answered Captain Day. "All things are fair in love and war, especially in love. Medfield has robbed you of the property that should have come to you from your father, and makes your poverty the excuse of keeping you from his daughter. Take courage, man; the *Twilight* is lying off Sandy Hook, and it will be your own fault if you are not on board two hours before daylight to-morrow morning. As to your future—well, I suppose I can give you a berth on board my ship. Why not? I suppose one craft is as good as another, and I believe any port in a storm is the sailor's motto."

Young Needham blushed, and was silent for a moment.

"What if Medfield should disinherit his daughter?"

"I may have a voice in that matter," said Captain Day. "The man who morally puts his head in the lion's mouth has to be careful. You are inclined to doubt the statement I made to you; let me put a question or two to this boy."

"No—no," hurriedly whispered Needham.

"Well, as you will," replied Captain Day, turning, in spite of the other's warning, to our hero. "Come, my lad, you want a berth, I suppose. You have no objection to sail with me?"

"I should be only too pleased, sir. I can do a sailor's work before the mast, below or aloft."

"Very well; I want you to come right along with me, when I leave Mr. Needham."

Then he turned to that young gentleman.

"You won't have any too much time, Frank—hadn't you better start at once?"

"Certainly," replied Frank Needham, who was nervous and excited. "You will be there?"

"To the minute."

"Thanks, old friend," and they parted for the time, and Captain Day told Will to follow him.

Before they had gone two blocks, however, he let Will come up alongside of him, and chatted pleasantly. He found that Will was by no means lacking in education, and said so.

"I use all my spare time on board ship, sir, in reading books out of which something can be learnt—I taught myself navigation."

"The devil you did; well, so much the better."

At Twenty-third street they turned down to the river. A large, open boat lay moored to the dock. Captain Day pointed to it.

"Now, Merrymac, I want you to stay in that boat, unlock the sweeps and put them ready for use, unfurl the sail so that it may be hoisted without a minute's loss of time, and be on the alert for our return."

"Yes, sir," answered Will, unconsciously saluting his superior.

There was something in Captain Day's manner and bearing that was not usual with the captain of a small trading vessel. The time soon came, however, when that something was explained by Will hearing that Day had been a lieutenant in the navy.

Before going, he gave Will a handful of cigars to while away the time.

It was a lovely night, and by the light of the moon Will examined the boat; she was decked forward of the mast, which deck was a locker. She was beautifully fitted, and built like a frigate's pinnace.

"Curious boat for a merchantman," thought Will; "I wonder what game they're up to? Guess I'm in for some adventure—well, I'm willing—I wonder how long they'll be?"

He wondered more than once, for time slipped on. Elev-

en o'clock came, and nothing happened to break the monotony until Will, on looking up, beheld a tall shadow creeping about suspiciously.

Merrymac was ashore in an instant.

"Halloo, you—why, you sneaking beggar, Uriah!"

Yes, it was Uriah, and he turned upon Will with a snarl.

"Didn't I tell you I'd foller yer? I owe you one for this morning, Bill Merrymac."

"I wish I was at liberty to give you a chance of settling accounts," answered Will.

"That's a sneak's way to get out of it. I knows the man you've got in with. Why don't you join a pirate gang, eh? Maybe I'll have you yet."

"Maybe you shall, young fellow," said a deep-chested voice, and Captain Day suddenly stood before them. "Is this the lubber you were telling me of, Merrymac?"

"Yes, cap'n."

"So you know me, eh? Now into that boat. You shall know a little more of me ere we part. In with you, or I'll pitch you in."

The way he took Uriah by the shoulder so forcibly, gave that young gentleman an idea of how earnest he was—made him tremble.

"I won't go."

"In with you!" and in another minute Day would have hurled him into the boat, had not Uriah, to save his neck, leaped in. "Go forward of the mast, you ill-looking beggar. Now, Merrymac, in with you. Take the sweep at the bow, and be ready. Here they come."

There was a quick patter of feet, and before Will was fairly seated, Frank Needham, accompanied by two cloaked and hooded females, dashed up.

"In with you," said Day.

Something like a sob from one of them was heard as they embarked, a few hurried assurances from Needham, a careless laugh from Captain Day, and before he knew it, Will felt the boat adrift, and Frank Needham sitting in front of him with the starboard sweep out.

"Give way," from Day, who had taken the rudder, and in a few minutes shot out into the stream.

"Merrymac!"

"Ay—ay, sir."

"Hoist the sail. We'll make a good run, I guess, with this breeze. Lend me a hand, Frank, and look out for the *Twilight*; she carries two masthead lights, and a blue one at the main."

They had a bracing sail now, down to Sandy Hook. At sight of the signal on the *Twilight*, Captain Day exclaimed, proudly:

"There she is!"

There she was, indeed, a large sloop, the perfection of build, painted a dull grey down to the water line; her tapering mast raked a little forward, and an immense length of bowsprit.

"*Twilight* ahoy!"

"Ahoy! Who's there?"

"Captain Day."

The gangway flew open, the folding step-ladder dropped down the ship's side, a line was thrown out, striking Uriah on the head and nearly taking his ear off, while the voice of Captain Day yelled:

"Lay hold of that line, you landlubber!"

Will had already run the sail down, and the boat hove to. In five minutes they were all on board, and then, as Needham escorted his female companions below, Will was startled at hearing the orders given to weigh the anchor and set sail.

"Beg pardon, cap'n," he said, "but I haven't got my kit on board."

"To the devil with your kit!" was the curt rejoinder, while Uriah stood shivering with dread.

"You don't intend to detain me?" he quavered.

"Don't I! Just you go forward and lend a hand at the

capstan-bars, or I'll detain you with a vengeance. Merrymac, *you* don't want showing your duty; stand by the jib sheet. Mr. Weeks, all ready?"

"Ay, cap'n."

"Quartermaster, keep her well out; you'll get a square breeze there."

"Ay—ay, sir," answered the man at the wheel.

At daylight they were far away from land. Uriah was gloomy enough then. Had he possessed a grain of the humorous, he would have seen the joke of him, who had intended hunting our hero, being forcibly carried off.

That he laid the whole of his trouble at our hero's door was evinced very soon; not yet being sea-sick, he could threaten, and he swore audibly to get even with Will.

Before mid-day, however, a startling change took place in their respective positions.

Captain Day, who had been watching the cheerful and masterly way Will did his duty, called him aft.

"Merrymac," he said, "come to my cabin and sign articles. I intend to rate you as third mate."

Uriah overheard the remark and turned green. Will blushed with gladness. The position was no sinecure, mind you; the third, or fourth—if there is a fourth mate—is always the head working officer. Most to do with the sailors, first aloft in the hour of danger and last down.

There was no time, the first day, to be looking about. Will did not exchange two words with any one outside the captain and his superior officers.

"Look after that loblolly," Day had said, referring to Uriah. "Don't let the beggar skulk."

So Uriah was set to cleaning and trimming the lamps and scraping spars, until he was all oil and tar. At night he was shown how to rig the head-lights, and it was his duty to keep them trimmed. Toward eleven o'clock Will observed that the port-light was in bad order, and without waiting to call Uriah, he climbed into the ratlines, a feat Uriah could not have performed, for the wind was blowing hard, and having both hands engaged, he had to rely purely upon his cat-like footing.

The sky was cloudy and the sea almost black; too intent upon his duty to notice anything else, he did not see a crouching figure stealing towards him.

He felt no sign of danger until he received a murderous blow that hurled him headlong out of the ratlines into the hissing sea.

One wild cry for help he uttered before he sank, but sank so quickly that he heard not the response of "man overboard!" and when he arose to the surface, the *Twilight* was far ahead, himself struggling, dazed and stunned, in the frothy wake of the vessel, the wash and plash of the waves moaning a funeral dirge in his all but deafened ears.

CHAPTER IX.

AN OASIS IN THE SEA.

THE *Andromeda* blazed and roared; the flames crept up her masts, and glowed and crackled until they toppled over or crumbled away in a huge pile of lurid charcoal.

The hulk burnt to the water's edge, was flooded, and sunk amidst a cloud of steam and floating cinders.

When the sun blazed down again the calm had returned, and a few dark patches, boldly outlined by the light of day, was all that remained of the *Andromeda*.

Captain Barpole and his villanous first officer had woefully miscalculated their operations.

The fire had so spread, and consumed the unseaworthy timber of the doomed ship, that in *fifteen minutes* after the first alarm the decks were untenable.

The boats had been cut loose, and tumbled into the sea, and before care could be given to the provisioning of them, the men were leaping overboard.

The women had been the first to be safely embarked in the small boats.

That boat, then in command of Cassidy, had picked up Fred, Mrs. Elmhurst and the boy.

Barrels of biscuits and water, some sea chests, some tins of preserved meat, and a few bottles of wine had been tumbled overboard, and left to chance to be regained.

In a word, Barpole's inhuman plot had recoiled upon himself, and when the men were picked up and divided into the different boats, and the collected stores looked into, the captain found that for every man, woman and child there was not two days' rations.

Add to this, they were in an unfrequented part of the ocean, under a blazing, tropical sun, fully exposed to it by day; the dews or rains by night, and the impossibility of men being capable of extreme exertion at the oars, and you can form some idea of the appalling position these hapless women and poor, unlucky Fred were in.

Portquarter Jack, who had gone overboard after Fred, was in the same boat.

"Ax pardin', Mr. Cassidy," he said, when the other boats, forming in line with the captain in the van, had started; "there's no hurry, sir, we'll get no help from them if things is wrong, an' I've been here afore. Better pick up all we can for these poor creturs, an' say nothing. Then, sir, I'd hang behind a bit; may be suthin' thrown up when she goes down as will be useful like."

Cassidy—who had borne the sobriquet of "Gentleman Cassidy"—looked at the lovely Mrs. Elmhurst.

His heart melted.

"Yes," he said, "my duty lies here. I will do as you say, Portquarter."

They gained but little, though, from the *flotsam* and *jetsum* of the burned hulk; but among the trifles was a keg of light wine.

"Now, lads," said Cassidy, "we may and we may not be able to keep up with the other boats; most likely we shall all get separated. We must trust in God and in each other; we must pull together willingly and hopefully. Remember, there is a greater responsibility here," pointing to the woman, "than the rest have. Remember you have mothers, sisters, sweethearts, and think of what you would expect of men who had charge of them as you have of these helpless creatures."

A sailor's simplicity and a sailor's pathos lent a force and eloquence to his speech.

It fired the men, and brought tears to the eyes of the gentler sex.

"We'll stand by you, Mr. Cassidy, sir, never fear," said one, and the rest repeated it very cheerfully.

"That's it, boys," cried the bo's'n, shaking hands, heartily.

"Thanks, my men, and may God reward you," replied Cassidy. "You must divide into watches, lads; pull easily, we shall gain nothing by over-exertion."

So they started on their watery pilgrimage with no objective point but the orb of day, and the western star at night.

Suffering at sea in an open boat has been too often and too horribly described for me to add to them.

A synopsis will suffice.

Scanty food, limited allowances of water, and the prostrating heat soon began their combined ravages.

A week saw them without a bit to eat or a chew of tobacco. The allowance of water about sufficient for a canary bird, and the heat increasing.

Two of the men helplessly sick, one of the women delirious, and two half dead with fever.

The oars were abandoned through the day, and those who were strong enough would swim around the boat in their clothes and then get in, and let them dry on their backs, that their bodies should absorb the moisture and thus slightly allay thirst, and act as a cooler.

One by one, in spite of this, they succumbed. It was a boat load of human misery and suffering, and the boat drifted on untended.

The elastic vitality of youth kept Fred up, but not sufficiently to do anything more than feebly tend little Eddie.

"Oh, if it would only rain!" he gasped towards the close of the ninth day. "Mr. Cassidy—Mr. Cassidy."

"Yes. What is it?"

"Can you look up? see—a dark line—look!"

"A storm," answered Cassidy, in a hollow voice.

"It will end our misery—a storm in tropics. God help us."

"But look lower—look towards the south."

"Eh, *what*—a dark, uneven line—*land—land!*" and a laugh that was that of a madman broke from him.

It even aroused the rest who retained one grain of consciousness.

But there was a rumble in the air. The dark cloud spread with fearful velocity, huge drops of rain pattered down like crystal pellets, forked and ziz-zag flashes rent the clouds, making fiery gaps, and the voice of Neptune answered the storm god, and the sea grew furious and lashed itself into a savage lair.

The both tossed, and rocked, and pitched, and was swept onward.

Then the rain fell in torrents, the thunder roared and reverberated, and the lightning played upon the ghostly faces of the dying and the dead; for death was amongst them.

And so they were swept on; and the boat began to fill, and the sea-foam mixed with the water that fell from the clouds; and those who could, drank of it, and their thirst became worse and they raved incoherently; when they arose high in the air the boat was swung like a missile hurled by unseen hands, swung as it seemed between driving cloud and whirling sea, and fell with a crash on high land.

* * * * *

"Hazle!"

"Yes, sir; water—water, come with me."

"Yes; where is Jack?"

"Here, lad."

"Where are we?"

"God knows—on an island; let us revive these poor creatures, and see what can be done. How this place seems to rock and tremble. Will the storm never cease?"

Never until too late.

Mrs. Elmhurst was one of the first to recover; two others gained some use of their limbs and knelt with her to pray.

Fresh water had been found. None felt their hunger now, and the bo's'n and Cassidy said they would go further inland, and see if there was shelter.

They could scarcely stand in the fury of the storm.

Then there was a dreadful rumbling and agitation beneath them, deadening the booming of Heaven's artillery overhead.

They were thrown heavily down to the ground. The women screamed in horror, the ground seemed spinning around under them, and it seemed that the sea was closing over them all, and the refuge they had found.

That was the dying fury of the storm, and its effects were so indescribably terrible, that the unhappy castaways were spared its further horrors by losing all consciousness.

When the dawn came, the tempest had ceased. The women revived once more. The men, stronger now, had gone inland, Fred said, to explore.

Mrs. Elmhurst said she would like to try a walk—others followed. They were suddenly startled by a loud and continuous hallooing from a distance. They turned to the right to run down, as they thought, to the sea.

Judge then the inexplicable horror of those helpless women when they came upon a gulf that separated them from Portquarter Jack and the men.

"How can we come to you?" yelled Fred.

"What is this?" shrieked Mrs. Elmhurst. "God spare us, we are moving; oh, save us!" and she held out her arms in mute and frantic appeal.

The bo's'n threw up his arms despairingly.
 "God help 'em!" he sobbed. "They're adrift!"

CHAPTER X.

A GHOST IN THE HOLD.

CAPTAIN DAY was just coming up the companion way when he heard the cry of a man overboard.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Mr. Merrymac, I think, sir," answered the man at the wheel.

"Bout ship—hang lights over the sides—over with some lumber—cut loose the buoys—keep a sharp lookout fore and aft—three week's double grog to the first man who sights him!"

It was a beautiful sight to see the *Twilight's* long sweeping hull swerve around, as obedient to her helm as a yacht. Heeling over till her mizzen boom swished along the waves, and then rising with level decks and head proudly lifted, as if conscious of the feat it had performed and the cause in which it was done.

"Silence!" roared Day. "Now give a hail and listen."

A right hearty hail it was, followed by stillness in which the hum of the ocean seemed to abate. Then, above it all, a faint, clear voice through the gloom.

"Lower away!"

Down went the boat, and the *Twilight*, by a skilful manipulation of the sails was brought to.

Ten minutes more and Will Merrymac was lying on the poop deck.

He was quite exhausted, and an examination showed that he had received a wound in the head. Frank Needham bathed the wound, and Captain Day brought up some dressing.

"He never fell over," said Needham.

"I know it. Halloo, Merrymac; why the deuce do you go tumbling overboard? What were you doing?"

"Seeing to the port light, sir," answered Will, opening his eyes, and a pained expression settled on his face.

"And tumbled out of the rigging?"

"I didn't tumble, sir; I was knocked off. I thought a thunderbolt had fallen."

The look on Captain Day's handsome face was fearful then. The whole expression changed to fury, checked and condensed, as if moulded into stone.

"Did you see anyone near you?"

"No, sir; I wouldn't call one of the men; the wind was blustery, so I did the work myself."

"Weeks!"

"Captain."

"I will have this affair sifted by the morning. Discover who was on deck. Where's that monkey-face devil of a landlubber?"

"A heaving up his stomach down below, sir," answered the boatswain, who was very fat, very short—not quite short enough to be spherical, and too fat to be oblong—perhaps an oval would be the nearest approach to his form.

"Well," said Day, "help Merrymac to his berth." Then turning to the second mate, said: "You had better turn in, too; Mr. Needham will take your place. I don't want Merrymac left alone."

While they were taking Will below, I must mention a curious fact, concerning a remarkable collection of names—all bearing upon time.

The captain was Day; 1st officer, Weeks; 2d officer, Yearly; the boatswain, Monday; the carpenter's name was Summer, and the vessel's *Twilight*.

No one was more struck with this coincidence than our hero. Add to this that the steward's name was Devil and the cook's Death, and the curiosity is complete, to say nothing of the fun it frequently caused.

For instance—boy pokes his head into the galley, with a message from the steward:

"Say, Death!"

"Halloo!"

"Go to the devil, he wants you."

"Ay—ay; I'll wait upon *you* some day, my shaver."

"Not in *his* company, I hope, thankee," and off scampers the young monkey to avoid an iron ladle or enormous beef bone.

"Can I do anything for you?" asked the cook, looking in at Will.

"No, thank you."

"You'd better take a pull at this, anyway," said the steward, holding out a cup of port wine, and elbowing the cook out of the berth.

Will took the wine, and when the two gentlemen with the unpleasant names had withdrawn, turned to Yearly.

"'Tain't always a fellow sees a devil in such a welcome form," he said, smiling.

"Don't joke, Merrymac; you had a narrow shave of it. Have you no idea who did it?"

"No; I suspect, of course; but I'd rather not mention my suspicions."

"I don't know what's come to the ship lately, but last night I heard most mysterious sounds below."

"Perhaps the carpenter was in the hold."

"No—it was under the cabin the old man gave up to the lady," answered Yearly, lighting his pipe.

"You don't believe in ghosts, do you?"

"Not quite; though I've had some strange incidents happen in my time, I'll bet you."

"Nonsense, Yearly," said Will. Then to change the subject, he said: "Where are we bound, and what cargo does the captain carry?"

"Well, you see, we're supposed to be in ballast, so we are. I'll tell you, Merrymac, do you know that hundreds of thousands of rifles are made in the United States whose destination is a secret known to but few."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, we have a cargo of them now, and it is not an unusual thing to give them up in mid-ocean."

"What—come, no hoaxing."

"It's true. They are disposed of to Russian agents, who convey them over the mountains to India, where they are sold to the wealthy chieftains, who some fine day will turn them upon the English in India, and then God help them. This secret arming—which is against the imperial edict—has been going on for years, and the English are ignorant of it."

Will opened his eyes.

"I thought," he said, "that the *Twilight* was not occupied in legitimate traffic."

"Oh, yes it is, though—we don't compromise our government, and the Russian agent keeps us from the British authorities. But there, you go to sleep, and get that head of yours sound."

But our hero could not sleep. He was restless and wakeful, and the peaceful slumbers of Yearly by no means added to the general restlessness.

The weather was calm, and the silence intense—towards the morning he became aware of a monotonous tap—tap, proceeding from the very bowels of the vessel.

He awoke Yearly.

"There's your ghost," he said.

Yearly swore, but roused himself.

The sound continued; Yearly got up, and went on deck. He spoke to Weeks, who was in command.

Weeks sent for the carpenter, and the hold was searched. The carpenter returned with a long face, and a smothered oath.

"Rats," he said, "or ghosts!"

"You're a fool!" growled Yearly; Mr. Weeks laughed at both of them, and sent the men below.

An hour later, and the sound was renewed; this was exasperating, but Yearly took no notice, but determined to see into it in the morning.

The search by daylight was fruitless, and both Yearly and Will were mystified.

At night the sound came again, and now the lady and her maid complained of them.

The men became awed. With a sailor's superstition, they prophesied all manner of coming horrors.

Some of the cargo, and even the ballast was shifted, but no discovery made, and for two nights the sound ceased.

On the third night they recommenced, and Will, who had just come off duty, crept softly down to the lower deck and listened.

His astonishment was dumfounding at seeing the unmistakable figure of Uriah Braintree creeping towards the hold aft.

"I s'pose if I watch the rat I shall find its hole," thought Will.

Uriah went in the direction of the sounds, showing clearly that he was not the author of them.

Shoeless and soft of foot, Will followed him, saw him shift the combing, watched him drop down, heard voices, and then without a thought of danger, bent over the hold and peered down.

There was a light below—a lantern that some one gave to Uriah, and told him to hold it.

What was Will's horror when he dropped down into the hold to see a strange man with a haggard face and fearful eyes, who, with a gouge in his hand, had been cutting and boring his way through to the captain's stateroom.

A ferocious knife and a deadly revolver lay at his feet—there was no mistaking his meaning.

He meant murder—who was to be his victim—Captain Day, or Needham, or both? And Uriah was his accomplice.

"I can shift these boards," he said; "I'll kill them quietly. The rest I don't care for. To-morrow I'll be master of the ship, and Miss Medfield my——"

"Not while I live, you monster!" cried Will.

The man uttered a fearful oath, and turned with the implement in his hand; our hero closed, and they struggled in a deadly embrace.

Uriah dropped the light and fled. Will sang out at the top of his voice, and the boatswain appeared; Monday, the captain, and Yearly following closely.

The ruffian was hauled up, and the crew trembled upon hearing that Merrymac had caught the ghost in the hold.

"Uriah was with him," said Will.

"Bring him here!" roared Day. "Hold a light, you. Hallo! it's Michael Forbes, is it? Escaped jail bird, convict and murderer, is it? So you stowed yourself away, eh? Now, where's Uriah?"

Uriah, with his knees bending beneath him, was dragged forward. At sight of the captain's face he collapsed; down he went on his knees and begged for mercy.

"I'll confess all," he sniveled. "I will, if you will forgive me, I'll confess."

He did. He told how he had met Forbes, who came to him and bribed him for food. How he promised, that

if Uriah would assist him, he would murder the officers, and then win the men over; how he would then have the ship and share its wealth, while the fate of the two helpless girls was so horrible, that even his craven tongue faltered when he spoke of it.

Captain Day kicked the whining cur across the deck, and then ordered Forbes to be put in irons.

"I'll settle him to-morrow," he said, his face black with fury; and had the ruffian known what fate was in store for him he would have begged for death in sheer mercy.

The sun was setting when the culprit was brought before the captain on the following, and to him, fatal day.

SECOND PART.

CHAPTER I.

ADRIFT.

THE appalled horror of Portquarter Jack and the men, when they beheld a mile and a half of land drifting slowly out to sea, robbed them of the power of action for a time.

He expected every minute to see it sink with the women and Fred.

What could they do? To swim in their exhausted condition for any distance was out of the question.

The first to recover was Cassidy.

"We must go out to them," he said; "now, boys, we must roll a fallen tree into the water and paddle after them."

The cyclone of the previous night had uprooted trees and strewn the shore with them. To Cassidy, the awful phenomenon of the drifting island was less inexplicable than to the men.

He knew now why the ground had been rent and shaken, and why they had been thrown down.

It was not all the fury of the storm. They had been thrown upon a volcanic island, which, by one of those marvels of nature so mysterious and unexplainable, was the mere outgrowth of volcanic forces, and the storm, aided by an eruption, had torn the lesser portion from the main land, and its want of anchorage left it at the mercy of the tide.

Fred and Mr. Elmhurst watched the men rolling the tree into the water with beating hearts.

The tree was floated at last, but it was an ungainly and unmanageable sort of raft.

Cassidy and the boatswain both sat across it, and paddled with broken branches. Fifty yards out from the shore the current swept in an opposite direction, and they found themselves being swept further away from the drifting island.

Cassidy groaned—Portquarter Jack uttered an oath.

"We'd better swim for it, sir," he said; "it's our only chance."

They dropped into the water and struck out. The men who were with them grew alarmed, and fearing they would be carried away to die a lingering death by starvation, struck out for the land they had just left.

Cassidy and the bo's'n swam manfully in the wake of the floating island. Jack was the first to reach it.

Cassidy was sinking, and about to relinquish the fearful struggle, when Fred Hazle plunged in to his aid, and brought him ashore.

Towards nightfall they had drifted out of sight of the other land, and now they seriously viewed their position.

Food, they had none, and what fresh water there was lay in hollows that had been filled by the rain.

"It won't last long," said Fred.

"No, lad, especially with the sun a boilin' of it down. God help the poor creatures, I say."

Three of the crew of the boat who had been the first to succumb were crying aloud for food. There was none for them.

On the third day Portquarter Jack came with a long face, and announced that the water had all dried up.

The women looked into each others' heated faces. The men into each others' staring eyes.

They huddled together and talked in thick whispers.

Mrs. Elmhurst sat with her beautiful boy clasped to her breast, shuddering at the look those men cast upon her as they talked.

"Why do they look at me so?" she said to the bo's'n.

The bluff old fellow shuddered, and motioned to Cassidy to come near.

"There's suthin' in the wind," he whispered; "better have Fred here, too, sir; look at the men."

"Ay—ay, I noticed them," replied Cassidy, who dared not trust himself to utter his dreadful suspicions.

The day was closing when the worst that could be feared happened.

The men, horrible and unreal in appearance, ferocious and inhuman now, came forward.

"Mr. Cassidy," said one, "me an' my mates is suffered enough, and think as how one ought to suffer for the good of all, and we think as how we oughter draw lots."

"Lots? What for?"

"To see who's ter die, to feed us."

Mrs. Elmhurst trembled.

"Not by my consent, my lads," answered the mate.

"That baby's a dying. She oughter give it up to us. It don't know what life is, like the rest on us—still—"

Mrs. Elmhurst uttered a piercing shriek, and staggering up, tried to drag herself away.

"No, you don't, marm; it's lots, and we'll all take a chance; even you, your baby—one on yer—"

"Never, by Heavens!" said Cassidy, drawing a pistol.

"Not while Portquarter Jack can strike a blow."

"Not if I can prevent it," said Fred, and they faced each other now.

Three to three, the men drew their knives and crowded in. Mrs. Elmhurst shrieked again, and fainted.

Poor little Eddie dropped from her paralyzed arms, and the man who had been spokesman, pounced on it like a vulture, and ran with a swiftness that must have been born of a desperation little short of supernatural.

When Cassidy recovered from his momentary horror, the man, turned brute, had stopped, and his thirsty knife was at the child's slender and unprotected throat.

CHAPTER II.

A HUMAN FIGURE-HEAD.

"So, you ungainly, blood-thirsty wolf, you wanted blood, did you, eh? and you would knock me and a few more on the head, and be leader. Lead my ship, so you shall. I'll give you a taste of how to lead a ship. The years you have lived are but a passing hour compared with the ages of infernal torture I'll inflict on you in twenty-four hours. Now, boys, trice him up—rig some tackle, and make a figurehead of him! I don't care how you fasten him, but do it so that he'll neither move head nor limb. Away with him."

Others may have seen Captain Day's intense fury, but Will had not, nor anything like it. The men obeyed in silent awe.

Not one had any sympathy with the escaped convict and murderer. The fiendishness of his plan—the horrible and nameless fate he had mapped out for the beautiful Dora Medfield and her pretty maid, made the men look upon him as a brute beast, who should be exterminated.

So he was lowered, sullen and defiant yet, and by ropes, bolts, and chains, fastened to the cut-water, his head bent forward slightly by being pressed against the under part of the bowsprit.

Captain Day was leaning over, watching the work; when it was finished, he spoke:

"Now, wolf, are you satisfied that you're leading the ship you wanted to? Now, listen to me, to what I say to my men."

He raised his voice and addressed the crew:

"God help the man caught speaking to him, touching him, or giving him a morsel of food or a drop of water, especially a drop of water. He's got plenty of that, more than he'll attempt to drink. Now, you effigy of a figure-head, you can ponder over your work, and the fate you intended for innocent women. It'll help you, too, to think of something more fiendish, you wolf!"

He ordered the men out of the bows, and walked aft.

The doomed wretch bore up for the first hour. The depthless infamy of his foul mind could not even conceive the possibility of Captain Day intending to keep him there till he died.

But the horrible torture soon commenced.

The human figure-head arose high above the water, and the now aching eyes saw nothing but the broad expanse of rolling billows around him—heard no sound but their hoarse, surging roar, as they gurgled in his ears.

And so the sun went down, and night came on, only too terribly swiftly for him. The water blackened and bubbled in a frothy stream as it was dashed forward from the vessel's bow.

Still the human figure-head, agonized and wakeful, piloted her on her speeding course.

The cruel heart found vent for its agony now.

He cried aloud for mercy. He called to the crew for aid, for intercession, for a cup of water, for only a brief relief. It was not long after when he called upon them to slay him in sheer mercy.

But the wash and rush of the ocean's tossing billows alone answered him.

And so through that terrible night, on through the blackening gloom—the waters around him, the waters beneath him, the waters above him, when the vessel dipped—the guilty wretch hung helpless.

Helpless, with a soul-racking pain coming in his stiffening joints, a dreadful terror preying upon his mind, and feasting on his heart.

He raved aloud in his agony, and going from supplicating prayer to blasphemy, cursed the God above for suffering him to endure such hell-like torment.

His wicked past came back to him all through this dark, appalling night. Faces of those innocent ones he had foully wronged, and sent to their graves. Faces of the—but, too many—who had died at his hands, and the secret of their terrible end known only to himself.

They came back to him now, one and all. A ghastly, weird troop. They hemmed him in, and floated before him on the white-crested waves. Their stony eyes were fixed unceasingly upon him. Their long, grizzly fingers raised and pointing at him in a fearful accusation, while their right hands were raised above, and they cried in sobs, in shrieks, in wails:

"Vengeance—vengeance!" and another voice, coming like the rolling of thunder, cried:

"Vengeance!"

How he shrieked then, or thought he did, and the winds howled mockingly at him, and the ocean arose with a stupendous roar, and washed over him, dashing the clammy sweat from his brow, blinding his eyes, and choking back his feeble gasps.

And so the long night passed away and the morning dawned.

He began to hope. The morn was lovely and calm; would not the captain relent? Had he not suffered enough?

His face was wan and distorted with horror, his teeth were locked, his lips shriveled up, his tongue swollen so that he could not open his mouth.

His body seemed dead—the stiffened limbs had ceased to feel. Alas, not so his brain—his heart or his soul. That had not lost its consciousness.

What a ghastly figure-head it had become now.

The water no longer beat over him; his sense of hearing was acute, he listened for any sounds from above.

But the morning advanced. He heard the chimes as the bell struck the hour, and watches were changed or meals announced.

But no one came near him.

Hour after hour goes slowly by. The sun blazes down upon him and upon the rippling water. Fish of many kinds and colors swim and sport around him, gamboling in glee, as if they gloated over his terrible doom.

The very wavelets rippled in the golden flood of joyous light with a cadence that only mocked him, while he was perishing.

What were his torments now? He was aflame from thirst; hunger gnawed at his vitals, and his eyes, staring and protruded, grew hot like balls of fire.

His jaw dropped and his tongue lolled out; he drank in the dancing spray that the vessel's cut-water hurled dancing up before him, and so continued the tortures of the day, and the second night came.

Twenty-four hours—twenty-four ages. Was his punishment complete—was it over?

The *Twilight* still plunges onward and the night deepens. Those faces and forms come again. He cannot bear their mocking and taunting now. He laughs with them—at them—laughs defiance, until they touch him and cry:

"Come with us."

Then others more horrible dart from the ocean. Dreadful, gnome-like creatures, with fiery eyes and horrible voices, with tongues of forked lightning and eyes of fire, and they say: "No, he belongs to us," and the others fade away.

The bursting brain gives way, the burning heart breaks, and the tortured soul flees from that limp and shapeless mass of clay.

The age of darkness is over, and the golden light of day comes again and gilds that shapeless form—all that is left of the human figure-head to lead her on her course.

CHAPTER III.

A FLOATING SEPULCHER.

CASSIDY'S heart bled for the poor, frenzied sailor, as he raised his pistol. He could not see the lovely child butchered before his eyes, and to save him, fired.

Thank Heaven the aim was accurate. The ball entered the madman's back close to the spine, and he fell with a low, snappish cry, relinquishing his hold upon little Eddie as he did so.

Mrs. Elmhurst had recovered sufficiently to recognize her darling's peril, and she rushed forward, preceded by Fred.

Cassidy had already lifted the frightened child in his arms, and was examining him to see if he had received any hurts, when a frightful distraction occurred.

The starving, maddened sailors saw their companion fall, and they crowded around him now. Biped wolves, no less ferocious than the prowling quadruped species lurking on the borders of the blood-reeking battle field, bestrewn with the dead and dying.

A frightful cry broke from Mr. Cassidy.

"Turn back—turn back!" he shouted, to Mrs. Elmhurst. "For God's sake, close your eyes!"

But she saw nothing but little Edgar.

"My boy—my boy!" she wailed.

"Take him, Fred. For God's sake, take them from this scene of horror! Where's Jack? Jack!" he hallooed, and then turned towards those unhappy men, turned cannibals.

The wounded sailor had leaped to his feet and drawn his knife, desperate to the death, now that his own life was menaced, and the fate he had intended for innocent Eddie was now to be his own.

The strongest of his companions were the first to flock around, some even turning up their sleeves, as butchers going to the slaughter, uttering the one horrible cry:

"He must die—he must die!"

It was here that Cassidy confronted them, and beseeched.

He called upon them by name. He called them friends, he called them "brothers," and begged them to be merciful as they hoped for mercy from Him who knows all.

He went among them with his feeble strength exerted to the utmost, and tried to force them back; but they only snarled, and their horrible wolfish eyes snapped fire at him, and turning

fought with each other for the possession of their unhappy companion.

They drew their knives and tore at his limbs. They seemed unconscious of his being still alive, and glowering up at them with piteous terror in his sunken eyes, and his palsied lips scarcely able to utter the words:

"Mates, in mercy kill me!"

Low as the words were uttered, Cassidy caught their meaning. The tears, hot and scanty, burst like globules of lead from his aching eyes, seemed to well, in fact, from his bleeding heart.

His very hair stiffened in soul-aweing horror as he saw to what unholy, unnatural torment they would have subjected him to—drinking from his lacerated wounds as they would from a fountain. He could not stand it any longer.

He gave vent to a hoarse cry that would have been a screech had he had strength enough, and with a superhuman strength hurled them aside, and stood over their dying victim.

But he was only one; they were four.

"You get at him only through me," he said, chokingly; and Portquarter Jack ranged up alongside of him.

The dying man looked up gratefully into Cassidy's face, and made an upward motion of his hand, a rattling in the throat accompanied it, and with the stony eyes still fixed upwards, he fell back dead.

"He's ours now," said one of the men, in a voice that sounded hollow and to come from a distance.

"Look above, men, and see what comes; see, and thank God on your knees for His mercy."

He pointed solemnly overhead; a black cloud had gathered, and there was a dull booming in the air, and large drops of rain began to fall, and soon kept up a continuous fusillade upon the dry and thirsty soil.

"Dig, my lads—dig holes with your knives. Dig for your lives, and catch all the precious fluid you can."

The men, consumed as they were with a tormenting thirst, hailed the rain with ferocious joy, and dropping on to their knees dug away like mad.

This afforded Cassidy an opportunity for carrying out a purpose that had already suggested itself—the burying the dead sailor in the sea.

He signed to Portquarter Jack, who understood his meaning at once, and together they dragged the corpse away to the edge of the floating island and cast it into the sea.

The rain fell faster and denser, but the cloud having burst, a soft, pale amber lit up the sea and the heavens, and Cassidy became aware of some moving black specks in the air!

They came on in the direction of the floating island, growing larger as the distance lessened, but still remaining very high.

"What are they, Mr. Cassidy?" asked Fred, who had been scooping up water for the famished women, assisted by Mrs. Elmhurst, who wore a water-proof serge dress, and making a basin of her lap, caught a large quantity of the rain.

"Birds of some kind, Hazle, and very large birds, too."

"I wonder if any of them will settle here?" said Fred, with a hungry glare upwards.

"They seem to be making for us, Hazle; but they may not be edible for all that."

"Look, Mr. Cassidy, there are a lot more; do you see them, they come in two long lines, and from different points of the horizon, and meet where the first flock flies?"

"These pilots, if I may call them so, smell something in the air, and the others know it by instinct—they must be birds of prey—what can bring them here—ugh!" and Cassidy shuddered, as he thought that probably the body of the dead sailor might still be floating with the island.

"There's suthin' in the water," said the hollow voice of Uncle Jack. "Suthin' that we don't see just yet. Them's albatrosses."

"Are you sure, Jack?"

"Nawtin' else could fly like that, an' at that hight. I knows the beggars."

"Are they good to eat?" asked Fred, so ravenous now that he almost pardoned the men for wanting a dinner off their messmate.

The boatswain's answer was slightly unintelligible, but had a curiously quaint ring in it, and sounded something like this:

"Damfino;" and then added, as if that was too ambiguous: "Guess you'd better practice on an ole shoe ter get yer teeth in practice."

Here for a time the subject had to drop. Cassidy found his ingenuity tasked to the utmost in devising means to store the water.

The soil of the floating island puzzled him considerably; at a foot below the surface the earth

was like a sponge, and crumbled the moment it was touched.

"It's like pouring water in a sieve," he said despairingly, a new light flashing upon him, and bringing with it the worst kind of alarm. But which he, however, kept to himself, until such time as he could make closer examination.

"Fred, and you, Jack, come with me, I want to see if we can leave Mrs. Elmhurst in safety, while we carefully explore the island, and ascertain if we have any means at hand that will enable us to store water. Do you feel equal to the task, Hazle?"

"Yes, Mr. Cassidy. I don't suffer from hunger so much as I did—now that my thirst is quenched; I feel sleepy, and should like to be moving about."

"If I only had a chew," soliloquized Jack, ruefully, "I'd keep up for a whole blessed week."

When they returned to the women, they found them—woman like—huddled together in mortal fear of the sailors.

Cassidy's agony at sight of these helpless women was something indescribable.

"Oh, God!" he cried, "grant me the power to succor these poor sufferers," and the tears stood in his haggard eyes.

"Brave and generous friend," said Mrs. Elmhurst, "pray do not distress yourself for us; rest assured we are prepared to die, should it be His will."

"You shall not die!" cried Cassidy, dashing away his tears. "Come, Jack; Fred, you stay and look after the women."

"Ay—ay!" replied Jack, cheerfully. But what could they do?

The more they explored the island the worse their prospects were. Cassidy became gravely troubled.

"Jack," he said, "this island is a mere excrescence of sea weed, fallen timber, and earth carried by the cyclones over the main land to which this was attached. Do you notice any change at all?"

"Wal, I can't say as I do, Mr. Cassidy," answered Jack.

"Look where we erected the signal staff." Portquarter Jack looked, and his eyes began to bulge.

"Why, stave in my—it's got nearer the edge!"

"Yes, Jack, but keep this terrible information to your own stout heart. *The floating island is slowly crumbling to pieces!*"

"Good God protect us!" exclaimed Jack, earnestly. "You don't mean that, Mr. Cassidy?"

"Go and look at the other signal staff," answered Cassidy, sorrowfully.

Very silent and thoughtful Jack went the circuit of the island. The same fearful truth made more glaring—the signals in most cases were being lapped by the water, and one had disappeared altogether.

Jack was turning away faint at heart, when something floating a little distance out caught his attention.

"A water cask, by thunder," he said, and leaped into the ocean.

A water cask full of water, and still more remarkable, it bore the name of the *Andromeda*—Providence had guided it in their wake.

But still no food could be obtained, and now they sat down powerless—waiting for death.

The great flight of albatrosses circled around the floating sepulcher, swooping down now and again, waiting for their prey.

Gaunt and ghastly the castaways looked, glaring into each other's eyes. Haggard—horrible, living skeletons.

Toward night the huge birds settled. Two of the sailors had died.

"Fred," said Cassidy, in a thick whisper. "Fred!"

But Fred lay face upward, dead to all surroundings, dead to his misery and suffering, and Cassidy, the last to give in, lay him down prepared, waiting, praying for death!

CHAPTER IV.

IN DEADLY PERIL.

"I THINK he's dead, sir," reported Will, turning away from the bows over which he had peeped at the human figure-head, and speaking to Captain Day.

Send that skunk Braintree over the bows to cut him loose; and, Merrymac, give him to understand that if he fails I'll have him triced up in the same way."

Will left the poop to see the captain's orders carried out. Though none could feel the slightest compassion for the escaped convict, his aw-

ful fate impressed Will unfavorably towards Captain Day.

Uriah, who had been confined below in chains, was overjoyed at getting his liberty; but when told that he was to go over the bows and cut the figure-head loose, he trembled.

"I can't," he whined. "Don't send me. I could never hang over there. I'm too weak and sick. Oh, it's horrible—horrible! only let somebody help me and I might get through. It's murder to send me alone."

"Is it?" said Captain Day, wrathfully. "You white-livered reptile, you, did you give me any chance—would you have given me any chance had your devilish plot succeeded? Over with him, and if he makes another objection, cut that carcass loose and put him in its place."

The terrible evidence of what Captain Day meant when he said a thing was before Uriah. That human figure-head, hanging limp and ghastly in its chains, was an awful proof of what this man would do in spite of all the maritime laws of this or any other nation.

So he whispered out:

"I'll try, sir."

"Try!" exclaimed Captain Day. "By the Lord, you'll have to do it! Monday, over with him!"

The boatswain, now looking more oval than ever, grinned; he disliked Uriah, and cared little or nothing whether he fell overboard or not.

The only person who felt any commiseration at all was Will.

"Perhaps, sir," he said, "Uriah could not keep his footing. Shall I do the work, sir?"

Captain Day glanced at our hero very sternly, a moment after his face softened.

"Merrymac," he answered, kindly, "if I thought that this cowardly lubber would do as much for you as you offer to do for him, I might think twice before I send him over the bows; however, I am commander here, and excuse me if I think you a fool for your pains."

"I beg your pardon, sir," answered Will, bashfully, and walked aft.

So there was no help for Uriah—he had to go—*willy nilly*, and he crept out on to the bowsprit and shivered.

Presently there was a screech, and old Monday turning the quid in his cheek, as well as turning himself, cried out, very lazily:

"Man overboard!"

"Who?" yelled Captain Day.

"That long shore lubber, sir," answered Monday, with as much indifference as if it had been a crab.

The *Twilight* was going ten knots an hour, and therefore forged ahead, while the unfortunate Uriah, from whom the screech emanated, was left wallowing in the froth of the waves in the wake of the speeding ship.

Will heard the screech, and saw a white and ghastly face dappling in the foam; without waiting to consider whose face it was or to whom it belonged, he leaped over the taffrail into the sea.

"What's that?" asked Captain Day.

"Merrymac overboard, sir."

Day uttered an imprecation, and ordered a boat to be lowered.

When our hero was picked up and hauled on deck with the half drowned Uriah, Captain Day ordered all sail to be set and took command in person.

"Where are we bound?" asked Will, later, of Yearly; "not the east?"

"I rather think this time the cap is taking arms into Spain for the Carlists," answered Yearly, in a low voice. "It's dangerous—very dangerous work."

"Why does he do it?"

"Because he's a reckless devil, and makes a big pot of money out of these trips."

Yearly was right. The *Twilight* put into Barracoa at nightfall.

Now it happened that Uriah had overheard a conversation between the first officer, Weeks, and Captain Day, and knew their secret.

A wicked light shone in his eyes, and he ground his teeth savagely.

"I'll be even with you," he hissed, "my fine captain, and you too, Will Merrymac. I'll get ashore somehow, and if I don't trap the lot of you somehow, my name ain't what it is. I'll find out the place of meeting. If I don't, I wish I may die!"

He had better and earlier opportunity than he expected. Captain Day, with his contemptuous indifference of anything so mean as Uriah, did not give him a thought.

Uriah, with a life belt around his waist, slipped silently down the cable, dropped into the water, and paddled to the shore.

He was not missed when Captain Day and Will left the *Twilight* in company with Mr. Weeks.

"I'll wait for you at the old place," said Captain Day to Weeks, as they landed, "and let me know how the land lays; find out who they are to be consigned to," with a grin, "and take care that you are not watched."

"No fear, captain," answered Weeks, laughing, and walked away.

The resort Captain Day took our hero to was an unsavory place enough, frequented by idlers and dissolute characters, who made Barracoa their home.

The room they entered was empty when they first went in; presently three or four brigandish and unclean-looking Spaniards walked in, and pretended to be in search of some one, glanced under their hat brims at Day and Will, exchanged glances, and took seats near them.

They were not more than seated, when a fellow of gigantic proportions, with the swagger of a bravo and the mustache of a Mephistopheles, sauntered in.

The rest greeted him respectfully—he answered them gruffly, and called for cards, staring rudely the while at Captain Day.

"Who are these fellows, Pedro?" he growled, with a motion of the forefinger towards our hero and Day.

"'Tis reported," answered Pedro, "that they are rich—princely adventurers from America, and, s'death, it would pay handsomely to slit their throats."

"The devil—who told you?"

"A runaway from the ship. He only wants revenge—ha-ha—the fool!—we can have the wealth."

The conversation was carried on in such a low tone, that Captain Day, who understood the language, could not pick up a word.

The last comer, whom Pedro addressed as "captain," pushed his glass across the table over to Captain Day.

"Drink, comarado!" he said; "don't be strangers."

"Many thanks, senor, but we are drinking, and I do not care to mix wine."

"Drink with us, or by the blood of old Spain, you will insult us. It is our habit to drink with strangers here. You will join us—and at cards."

"If you want drink I will treat you, but you can keep your cards, and wine, and your company for those who will better appreciate them. Don't throw away your hospitality upon me."

The swarthy face grew red with passion, and the don's eyes flashed fire.

Other stragglers had come in now, and the rattle of dice, the fierce oaths and imprecations, the shuffling of cards, and clinking of glasses kept up a lively din.

"Wait," muttered the don, to his companions; "we will find an excuse to insult them."

"What did he say, sir?" asked Will.

"He wishes to force me into playing cards, and I won't. The whole gang here are known to each other. They cheat you openly, and if you expose the cheat he calls the whole horde of heelers up, and the chances are you'd never live to tell of the circumstance."

"Not a pleasant set to be mixed up with."

"No. Keep on your guard, Will, and should anything happen, don't hesitate to defend yourself at any cost. You are armed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Hallo! that's a pretty voice," and as Captain Day spoke, a pretty, black eyed, olive tinted Spanish girl, in the theatrical costume of the street musician, entered.

She cast a timid glance along the faces of the company until her glorious eyes rested on Captain Day and Will.

She stepped lightly up to them, unslung a guitar, and in a voice that would have silenced a nightingale, sang an old-time love ditty.

Day was charmed, Will was simply enraptured.

"Thank you, pretty one," said Day. "Come, Will, let us reward her," and he gave her some gold coins; Will, not being so rich, had to content himself with silver.

The girl's face flushed gratefully.

"Ah, excellenza!" she said, "you are too good. I do not deserve all this. I am grateful—grateful for the kind words that I too seldom hear."

"Who would treat you roughly, my child?"

The girl looked timidly around and said, softly:

"I am poor, senor; these people are rough and rude, and think they can insult me for a trifle of money."

"Then they are miserable curs; such ruffianism does no credit to your countrymen," said Day, loudly.

"Come, Ninetta," call the don, roughly, "cut coquetting, and sing."

"Take my advice and leave this place," said Day, quietly.

"Do you hear, Ninetta?"

"Senor, I am tired; I sing no more to-night."

"By Heavens, you shall!" cried the Spaniard, savagely, taking the girl by the arm.

The girl uttered a cry of pain; she was hurt. Day's towering figure arose to its full height, and he released the girl's arm, and with his right hand knocked the Spaniard clean off his feet.

That was all the don had been waiting for.

Nothing but blood could wipe out such an insult.

"Escape, my girl," whispered Day, pushing her towards the door.

Not a minute too soon.

The whole horde of ruffians arose with wolfish ferocity.

They fastened the door, then put their backs against it, while the "capitano" got up, and with an oath that only a Spaniard can invent, drew a long and blood-thirsty knife.

"Let neither of them escape!" he cried. "The blood of a Spaniard must be atoned for!"

"Keep back!" cried Day, drawing his revolver; and Will leaped to his commander's side, silent and resolute.

Surrounded as they were, it was doubtful, even with revolvers, whether they could escape, and they made up their minds to sell their lives dearly.

None suspected that a white face was peering through a window in upon them. The face of Uriah Braintree.

Callous, heartless assassin; feeling himself secure now, he drew a pistol, determined to aid these wretches whom he had set on; covering our hero's form, he sent a ball crashing through the glass.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH OUR HERO AND HIS CAPTAIN FIND THEMSELVES IN A WORSE FIX THAN BEFORE.

FORTUNATELY the pistol is not the deadly weapon people generally take it to be, unless at very close quarters.

Thus Uriah missed our hero, but the ball took effect in the neck of one of the Spaniards standing by a table in the rear of the crowd.

The yell he gave, his leap upwards and heavy fall, caused a momentary panic.

"That was a friendly shot," smiled Captain Day, grimly.

He did not suspect whom it was intended for.

Will laughed, inspired by his captain's coolness.

"Now, my friends," continued Day, calmly, "come away from that door."

"Bar their passage!" cried the don, fiercely.

"They're worth a fortune, comrades. They're contrabandists!"

He could not find a word exactly suitable to convey his meaning; the rest of the cut-throats seemed to understand him and clamored for their blood.

"Keep them here, comrades—dead or alive. The authorities will look after their ship."

"We are betrayed!" said Captain Day to our hero. "That fellow is telling the yelping devils to keep us, dead or alive."

"I shall fight while I have strength!"

"Don't fire till they press us too hard, lad, or we shall be out of ammunition, and then they will surround us."

"I shall not waste a shot, cap'n."

"Good! Keep a sharp look out. They're making ready to close in."

They were. Uriah, who had seen with savage disappointment the effect of his shot, would have fired another but for the sound of voices, among them that of Mr. Weeks.

To be discovered here would be fatal to himself, so he leaped down from the window, and crept away.

Ninetta, the strolling player, had made her way to the landlord, and informed him that the sailor guests were in danger.

The landlord only shrugged his shoulders.

"You are a coward!" said the girl, with flashing eyes, and hastened away.

Woman's wit readily suggested a course of action; she hastened down to the shore, and sought among the boats for one containing Englishmen, as she took Captain Day to be, and sighted Monday at once.

Here arose a difficulty.

She could not make herself understood, and tried to convey what she would have said by various wild gesticulations and excited utterances.

"El capitano—el capitano!"

"Shiver me, what does she mean?" he asked, perplexed.

She repeated the cry and pointed to the town.

"Pards," said one, "the skipper's in trouble and wants help."

"That's it—out oars—give way to the ship, boys, and bring back Mr. Needham. He'll understand her lingo; he'll bring some more of the lads along. I'll wait here."

Ninetta seemed to understand what the old fellow was doing, and remained quietly by his side till the boat returned.

Frank Needham in great alarm jumped ashore and addressed her in very inferior Spanish.

The girl explained the case at once, and Needham, with Monday and four men at his heels, and Ninetta leading the way, were soon outside of the hostel.

They could hear the sound of a scuffle from where they stood.

At sight of this reinforcement from the stranger's ship the villanous landlord made a hypocritical show of zeal in their behalf.

"Ah, senors," he cried, "our Lady be with you. Your friends are in trouble; let us hope it is nothing serious."

"Force that door, or order those scoundrel customers of yours to open it," said Needham.

Mine host took down a blunderbuss that would have been a treasure as stage property, and hammering on the door with the butt, called loudly and authoritatively on his patrons to open.

The combined efforts of Needham and the sailors soon sent the door flying open and precipitated them into the room.

The sight of the landlord with the blunderbuss had a marked effect upon the crowd.

That antiquated implement spoke volumes, apparently, for the men drew back into the furthest corner of the room, and pointing at Captain Day, said:

"He began it—on my soul he began it!"

"Never mind who began it; I won't have the peace of my house destroyed. Do you want to bring the *gens d'armes* down upon us?"

He scowled horribly as he said this; the men eyed each other sullenly.

"Come, get away all of you, and let these gentlemen-strangers abide in peace. S'death, is this the hospitality of Spaniards? Shame on you!"

"It is well for them you came in time," said Day, "or I would have blown the head off the shoulders of some of them."

Already many were wounded, some severely, others slightly, from blows delivered by Captain Day, with the leg of a broken table.

The unfortunate man whom Uriah had accidentally shot, lay unconscious, dying, perhaps, while Day and Will both bled from knife wounds.

The mate, Weeks, who had joined Needham, when they were forcing the door, was pale and agitated.

"We must get out of this at once, captain," he said, in a whisper; "your mission is known, and spies are all over the cursed town."

Before, however, Day could reply, the tramp of feet and ring of musket butts on the ill-paved yard of the hostel warned them of a greater danger than the one from which they had just escaped.

Presently an officer and three *gens d'armes* strode in.

The hostel was surrounded by others, and the position was a critical one.

Captain Day was the first to speak.

He accused the Spaniards of attempting his life and that of his young officer, with intent to plunder them.

The officer of the *gens d'armes* looked coldly around him.

"Who do you charge?" he said, with lowering brow.

Captain Day pointed out the swaggering don as a leader, and those who had been most active in assisting him.

The officer called four more of his men, and ordered them to handcuff the culprits, and take them away together with the wounded man.

Then he turned towards Day.

"You will remain here under arrest," he said; "and him," pointing to Will, "and this one," touching Weeks lightly on the shoulder.

"Why do you detain me? It is against the law."

"I have my orders. If you are not satisfied to remain here under guard, I'll remove you. I have my orders; your other men can go back to the ship; she will be detained."

"I protest!" said Captain Day, angrily.

"What is that to me?" was the gruff response.

then to the landlord: "You have an upper chamber; put the prisoners there; show the way."

Weeks looked at his captain in dumb stupefaction.

"We're in for it!" he said. "By thunder!"

"What can they do?" replied Captain Day, though he looked uneasy.

"What do they mean to do with you, sir?" asked Will.

"I'm afraid we shall be detained by the authorities, Merrymac," answered Captain Day, gloomily; "confound them, they delay one so, the idiots!" and then he bit his lips in excessive vexation.

"Now, seniors—this way," said the officer, when the landlord returned with a flickering oil lamp.

Sandwiched between a file of the *gens d'armes*, Captain Day and his two friends were conveyed to a chamber above. It was a sleeping-room with three beds of the "camp" style standing against the walls.

A small table, some rickety chairs, and a water pitcher completed the furniture.

The floor was as destitute of carpet as the walls were of paper or paint.

"A lively den for a hotel," smiled Day.

Then he said to the officer.

"Senor, have you any objection to our ordering some refreshments?"

"If you can pay for it."

"Thank you, I had no intention of putting the government authorities of Barracoa to any expense. Will you join us?"

"I am on duty; I never drink with prisoners."

Captain Day gave the landlord an order for wine and some cold meat or fowl, emptied his cigar case on the table, and shying his cap across the room, sat down with the utmost nonchalance.

Then the landlord returned and placed a heavily laden tray on the table, and left them. The officer examined the room and the window.

"Make no attempt to escape from this," he said, tapping the glass with his knuckles. "There will be a sentry placed below with orders to shoot any one attempting to escape."

"Thanks, you're considerate," said Day, carelessly, and the officer went out in evident disgust, and a moment later they heard the door locked upon them.

"This is unpleasant," said Mr. Weeks, gloomily.

Captain Day laughed.

"What can they do, after all?"

"Confound them, you can't trust these beggars, no how. They'll trump up a charge or detain us on suspicion—"

"Not they," answered Day, in a low voice. "If I can't bluff the noodles here, I have spent my last ten years of life for nothing—pass your glass, Weeks—and you, Merrymac."

"Thank you, sir. I'm doing very well."

"Pooh—you may as well make the compulsory stay as comfortable as possible. I'm devilish glad, though, we didn't lay any of those fellows out stiff, though the fellows we wounded will lie like Turks, no doubt."

Considering the peculiar situation they were in, and the probable loss and trouble Captain Day might suffer, for all he knew, this was taking things mightily easy.

As the night deepened, Will began to doze in his chair, and Day told him to lie down on one of the beds.

"I think I'll turn in, too, cap," said Weeks.

"I shall do the same presently."

They were both soon asleep, and the silence was only broken by the sentry outside the door shifting his position, or the steady tramp of the one below the window passing to and fro.

"If I could only devise means of escape?" thought Day, "I would risk it. The *Twilight* must not be overhauled in my absence. Who could have been the traitor to betray me? What's that—rats, I suppose."

He threw the stub of his cigar away, and went over to the remaining bed. It was too near the wall, and he pulled it out into the center of the room. The walls had certain mahogany colored and voracious insects of a peculiarly powerful odor, known to most dwellers in old houses in large cities.

Captain Day was not partial to them, hence he pulled the bed out and threw himself down in his clothes.

He lay more awake than asleep—lay in a state of semi-consciousness that keeps the senses alert to the most trifling sound.

The rats—if rats it were—became noisier and more restless; presently the gnawing, scratch-

ing sound deepened into the veritable grating of a rusty bolt being wriggled out of its socket.

He raised his head at this and glanced under his half-closed eyelids in the direction whence the sounds came, and to his speechless astonishment, saw the portion of the floor on which his bedstead had lately stood slowly raised and a pair of black eyes gleaming at him.

CHAPTER VI.

A WORSE FIX STILL, BEING A CASE OF OUT OF THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE.

CAPTAIN DAY feigned sleep with admirable nerve, but still watched those gleaming eyes and wondered what they wanted.

Such places as these seaport hostelrys do not bear very good reputations, as a rule.

The landlords generally belong to a band of unscrupulous thieves and assassins, and have no conscience in the matter of acquiring riches so long as they are acquired.

"But, surely, with the house surrounded with officers, no one would be fool-hardy enough to attempt robbery," thought Day. "Ah, come along, my joker, I'm waiting for you."

The trap door was lifted higher, and the whole of the head and face of a young man, prepossessing and beardless, were exposed to view.

Both his hands supported the trap door, and as his body arose, it was plain enough he carried no arms that were visible.

His movements were slow and stealthy as those of a cat.

He pushed the trap quite back without so much as creaking a hinge.

Then he stepped out, and stood in an attitude of listening. The pose was full of grace. The face earnest and thoughtful.

Captain Day's wonder increased. This mysterious visitant puzzled him.

Now the young man took one step nearer, and scanned the faces of the three men.

Captain Day could play the spy no longer, so opened his eyes wide, and stared at him point blank.

The young Spaniard started—not in fear for himself, evidently, but in alarm lest Day should raise a noise—and placed his finger hastily on his lips to enjoin silence.

Day looked eloquent interrogation.

"Hush, senor!" whispered the stranger, coming close and bending over the sailor.

"What do you want?"

"Hush! for your life's sake!"

Softly on tip-toe the visitor stepped to the door, and listened intently. He could hear the *gens d'arme* snoring peacefully.

He returned to Captain Day.

"I am Beppo, senor. The landlord's nephew; Ninetta is my sweetheart, and she has told me of your gracious goodness and generosity, most noble senor. Ah! if they were all good and generous like you, excellenza, Ninetta would soon be my bride, and my uncle could not separate us."

"Well, my fine fellow," whispered Day, "have you taken all this trouble to come and thank me for nothing?"

"No—no, senor! I have come to help you."

"To help me! How?"

"To help you escape."

Captain Day sat bolt upright. Beppo was becoming interesting.

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, senor; I have a secret—I can help you!"

"Do, good Beppo, and I will help you; you shall have a dowry for Ninetta that will give you a start in life."

"You are too noble, excellenza; my life is yours; let me tell you all I know, and then wake your companions."

"I listen."

"Do you know, senor, this hostel was once part of a monastery—part of the House of Exercise now standing alone on those rocks at the back of here, and overlooking the bay? It belongs to the order of Black Monks, and some stories, not creditable to men of their sacred calling, are told of them. I know of a passage that leads to the ruins of the old monastery, and from there, senor, you could escape to the sea."

"Good, Beppo! I will awake my companions," said Captain Day.

A light touch and a warning gesture awoke them and kept them silent.

"Weeks, we've a way out of this," Day whispered. "Take your boots off, both of you. This boy is my informant."

"But we have no arms, if we should get into danger," said the first mate.

"I had forgotten." Then to Beppo. "They

took our arms from us, Beppo. What shall we do if we are stopped?"

"Your arms are piled on a bureau in the room below, senor. We will get them."

"You're a treasure—when shall we start?"

"When we have arranged the beds to look as if you were sleeping in them," answered the ready Beppo, with the ease of one who had been all his life helping strangers out of tight places.

Noiselessly he went to work taking the caps of the three men and placing them all with their crowns towards the door.

They looked just as they would had the prisoners merely thrown themselves down and lazily drawn the covering over their bodies to keep the chill of the morning off.

"Senors, I will go first and get the light; follow me; leave the trap; I'll run up the ladder and close it."

Captain Day followed, then Will and lastly Weeks. The ladder they descended by was steep and rickety.

The room they found themselves in was oblong, with only one little window which looked into the hall outside, and nothing but lumber and empty boxes and casks filled the floor, and were piled half way up the walls.

Beppo closed the trap door above, and then shifting the ladder closed another one that opened downwards. It looked like part of the dingy ceiling now.

"Do we go out there?" asked Day.

"At the door? no, senor, we should be heard."

He lifted another trap and disclosed a narrow, winding flight of stairs, thickly covered with dust and cobwebs, and otherwise extremely uninviting.

These stairs they descended with caution; ten feet down they took a straight course. Then came another twist, followed by another straight flight, and so on, until Captain Day reckoned that they must at length have reached a depth of twelve or fifteen feet below the basement.

The damp odor of this half earth, half stone passage was very offensive to our hero, but he made no comment.

Liberty is too dear at all times for those who are fighting for it to consider the cost, whatever it may be.

As they traversed this passage, it narrowed, and a light breeze fanned their nostrils.

Fallen masonry, crumbling pillars and moss covered blocks of shattered stone lay around on all sides.

They put their boots on now, and presently emerged into the open air, but it came from above.

High and heavy walls surrounded them. The ruins of a spire or sepulcher was around them; but no exit here.

Beppo went to a small archway and pushed open a door. They entered, and the feeble light of the lamp he carried discovered a vault, or vaulted corridor of some length.

It terminated, however, very abruptly and turned sharply to the right, but at a short distance merged into a huge, square chamber.

Our hero began to feel uncomfortable. The silence, the character of the gloomy place shut out from the eye of the world, wrapped in mystery and darkness, shadowed with the ghosts of centuries of Romish secrets and superstition, and perhaps many a crime committed in the name of Him who bled to save the world's sinners.

Through this chamber they came to a lower corridor of the monastery, lined on each side with cells whose doors seemed hermetically sealed.

These were the dormitories of the monks, where they retired to do penance or commune with their secret souls.

"Senor," whispered Beppo, "we shall come to the chapel at the end of this. It is easy to get out from the inside, but impossible to get in from the outside."

"Come, then."

"Hold, heretics!—hold, defilers of the sacred home of the brethren of holy friars! Debased and sacrilegious despoilers, what do you here?"

One of the cell doors had opened, and a stalwart priest stood towering before them, his face white with wrath, his eyes aflame with outraged indignation.

"Father," said Captain Day, "we are not despoilers or defilers."

"What want you—whence come you?"

"We want succor from those who would encompass our ruin—we came from an abode of danger and misdeeds—from the hands of the lawless—"

Captain Day was "pitching it strong," when the wrathful monk raised his arms aloft.

"Silence, heretics! Knowest thou the penalty

of breaking into the sacred House of Exercise—the penalty of sacrilege?"

"We are here, and in the name of justice and humanity I demand refuge."

"Out upon thee! I will not hear thee!" and turning swiftly upon his heel, he re-entered his cell.

Day would have followed, had not a sound, loud, sonorous, and ominous, made his heart leap. It was the clang of the monastery alarm bell.

"Stop him!" cried Day.

But it was too late; doors began to open all along the corridor. The rush of feet was heard in the distance, and, as if conjured up by magic, they found themselves surrounded by two hundred fierce, relentless fanatics, with death threatening them from their eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

SHOWS THAT EVEN CANNIBALISM CAN SERVE ITS PURPOSE.

So paramount is the first law of nature, namely: "self preservation," that a little cool reflection must prove that even cannibalism, instead of being the morbid creation of the "sensationalist," is only the natural result of certain conditions in which men may find themselves.

To-day—incredible as such an assertion would be, did it originate from less reliable sources than the foreign consuls in China—the poor wretches there in the famine-stricken districts are selling children in the open markets for food.

Yet had a description of one of numberless scenes of revolting horrors that must already have occurred there been described in what the beggarly howlers of the newspapers term "sensational literature," and they would have yelped themselves hoarse over the "sensational emanations of a morbidly diseased brain," etc.

Good can come of the greatest evils under given circumstances, as I shall presently prove.

Had the Heavens rained food upon the floating island, and had the island itself run crystal fountains, what would the helpless woman and still more helpless child have gained from such blessing while lying there as inanimate as the dead, without external aid?—none.

The last sense of consciousness had left them, even the delirious lay with an awful quiet upon them—more of the next world than of this.

They lay in a huddled heap, oblivious of their sufferings, it is true, for the time, but an awakening must come, even if only in the tortures of the last throes of mortal agony.

A little distance from the woman the boat-swain lay, face downwards; near him, on his side, lay Cassidy, with hollow, staring eyes and drooping jaws, with nothing covering the framework of his face but tightly-drawn, yellow skin, glazed and almost transparent.

His limbs were but skeleton limbs, every sinew could be traced beneath the dusky skin. It was a marvel that life had not long since deserted so miserable and apparently untenable a frame.

This description of him applies to all in this group, while even the most fleshy and powerful of the men were not much better.

They made a group by themselves since the tragedy.

They had terrible reasons for it. The body of the unhappy man had got hitched by the clothes to the island, and floated on with them. One of the despairing, starving men saw it, and only waited till Cassidy and the bo's'n got out of the way to tell his companions, and they turned towards the spot in silence, and yet with a tacit understanding for what horrible purpose.

A pack of human wolves dragging their prey to a hiding place, snarling and growling in fear of discovery, and defiance against interference.

The prey was concealed till Cassidy and Jack had succumbed, and then in the shadow of the falling twilight, a fearfully inhuman, heart-sickening orgie went on. These unhappy monsters, crawling away from each other like jealous wolves, or perhaps from one atom of mind over matter remaining—crawled away in sheer shame, each wishing to hide from the other his cannibalism.

They survived this fearful night. They even slept; and inhuman as the deed seemed, it humanized them towards others.

Rain fell again towards morning, and refilled the little reservoirs; but as the sunlight grew stronger, the men stood up and scanned the horizon.

The haggard eyes borrowed a new light from the long entombed hope.

In the wake of the floating island arose before

their wondering gaze an immense green field, almost level with the sea, and gently undulating like a carpet spread upon the ocean's waves.

Was it real?

Did their overstrained senses deceive them, and mock them with a vision?

None had seen the like before; not a shrub or tree—all was as level as a grass meadow. How they glowered upon it as the island drifted into it; but when it struck, a hollow groan escaped them.

It parted with a hissing, surging sound when the island struck it, and began to cling around their floating sepulcher like a verdant belt.

It was only an island of floating seaweed, a common occurrence in these latitudes, though covering a space of many square miles.

As their hollow eyes grew dim again while watching, the water around them became agitated. Here and there a spout of water would be thrown up.

A school of sharks in search of prey. What prey? that was the question asked by the simple expression in those hollow eyes as they turned slowly upon each other; but those hollow eyes could not answer.

The answer came from elsewhere. The surface of the sea around the island became alive with bright-colored fishes. The air the next moment was spangled with them, as a school of flying fish took their extraordinary flight of thirty feet or so, scores falling on to the island, while hundreds lay helpless upon thick seaweed, entangled in its meshes and almost dead with terror.

Providence had sent them food at last. How they pounced upon the pretty little plump things that lay nearest to them. How two—the most thoughtful—knelt on the edge of the floating island and drew in the seaweed with frantic energy and haste, to pick the Heaven-sent food from its meshes.

How long the exciting scene continued they never knew, but the edges of the island and the gigantic bed of seaweed became alive with the flying fish.

Even while these wolves worked they eat of them—eat them raw—eat them while their gills were still gasping in life; but they worked all the same, till they began to break the meshes of the seaweed and let the captured fish fall back into the sea.

Then they desisted that the seaweed might pack closer and firmer about the island, and then one—he who had been the most ravenous over his ghastly meal of the night before—asked hoarsely:

"Where's t'others? Not all dead!"

Humanity was regaining its sway. They went in a body to the suffering women, their mate and their officer.

They carried water. They tore strips of fish into morsels, and having given them water, placed some of these morsels in the famished lips, bathed their heated temples, and lay their heads upon pillows of soft, fragrant seaweed.

You have shuddered at these men as cannibals; what are they now? The salvation of those who still retain enough vitality to live. Reason torn from its throne by dire want had made them cannibals. Becoming cannibals had restored or prevented the total collapse of reason, and reason made them men again.

Rather shudder at the cause of the revolting deed than at the deed itself.

One of the poor creatures felt the food in her mouth, and masticated it, but could not swallow a particle. Mrs. Elmhurst was more fortunate, and little Edgar eat as a child will, almost unconsciously.

Cassidy and Portquarter Jack revived with marvelous rapidity, bolting strips of raw fish with a relish that did not admit of asking any questions, at least not until Jack was able to sit up.

Then he took up a fish in each hand.

"Stave in—bite—my—bite—port—bite—why—bite—where in thunder—with a mouthful—did that come from!" Bite—bite—bite. "Chuck us another."

"Yes, where did they come from?" asked Cassidy.

He who had been the most ravenous of the human wolves lifted his eyes as the tears rolled down his cheeks, and lifting a hand Heavenward, said:

"There!" and the word sounded like a sob.

But the day wore on, and Hazle had not regained consciousness.

"He's too far gone," said Uncle Jack, brokenly.

"Poor, beautiful boy," said Mrs. Elmhurst, raising the prostrate body. "How dreadful he looks, and how long his hair has grown."

"I'll cut up some fish very fine—try him, marm, with a little bit at a time," said Uncle Jack.

Topsy Turvy, Mrs. Elmhurst's colored nurse, was regaining strength, but she could only crawl to her mistress on her hands and knees.

Hazle's stomach revolted at the food, and his throat swelled at every attempt he made to swallow.

"Mr. Cassidy," said Uncle Jack, "give a hand here. We'll carry him to the water's edge, and bathe and rub his limbs. That jacket, marm, is much too tight about the lad's neck," and Jack made to undo it.

Mrs. Elmhurst uttered a sort of a cry.

"No—no, Uncle Jack—you must not move him—leave him with me and Topsy—leave him—do not touch him now. Do not move or disturb him—you can, in this case, trust a woman to be his nurse—indeed you can!"

She almost threw herself upon Hazle's body as she spoke. Uncle Jack was more than surprised. Mrs. Elmhurst's evident terror alarmed him—what was she afraid of—what, indeed? What discovery had she made? Why should she oppose so natural a wish as Uncle Jack's?

He must have thought it unreasonable, for he said, resolutely:

"Sorry, marm, but Mr. Cassidy an' me is strongest an' will fetch him around sailor fashion if there be life in him—we'll take him out o' sight o' you, marm—never fear."

"You must not!" she cried.

But Portquarter Jack put her gently aside.

"The lad's more to me than all else," he said.

Mrs. Elmhurst threw her emaciated arms around Jack's bent neck with a frantic, nervous strength that astonished him.

"One word," she said, "bend lower—lower still. Do not touch him till I have spoken, Uncle Jack."

He bent lower till his ear was level with her lips.

"She's crazed," he thought, and waited for that one word.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUT OF ONE DANGER INTO ANOTHER.

In days gone by, had Captain Day found himself in the perilous position he was now in, surrounded by the two hundred monks, blood would have been shed before a word was spoken.

Fortunately for the world, those days are gone. Captain Day, with his knowledge of the language, was enabled to parley.

"Who is superior here?" he said, calmly.

"The superior is only one voice among the secret order of the House of Exercise," replied one, who really was the superior.

"Then let me address the secret order. Your calling should make you ever ready to extend the hand of charity, mercy and assistance to those in distress."

"Was it for charity you came?"

"No; except the charity of humanity and religion."

"How came you?"

"By accident; guided by the will of Providence, I judged, when I saw where the path of escape led to."

"You are not of us—"

"By calling, no—"

"Nor of our faith?"

"Do you make that a condition?"

"We must weigh all things. You have committed sacrilege—you have intruded into the sacred retreat of those who have done with the world."

"A good and Christian way to humanize it!" retorted Day, with a laugh that was a mixture of mockery and defiance.

"Who and what are you, and why came you here?"

"I am an American citizen, captain of a trading vessel—I came here because my liberty and life were in danger," and he told what had occurred while waiting the return of one of his officers.

The priests listened and exchanged glances.

"How should we know that you are not fugitives from justice?"

"Because you have no right to doubt what I have told you."

The haughty tone and demeanor of Captain Day angered these holy men more than he knew—possibly, too, or cared.

"Come," he said. "Let me place an offering at your shrine—a gift for the poor and the holy brotherhood, and we will depart in peace."

The superior conversed in a low tone with some of his brothers, and then addressed Day:

"We must hold a conclave to decide, senor," he said. "You and your companions must submit to remain under lock and key while we debate."

Had it not been for the crafty gleam in the superior's eyes, Day might have readily assented.

As it was, he thought to himself.

"A trap! No, thank you."

Then aloud:

"My time is precious, too precious to risk the uncertainty of a long debate. Your cloth absolves you from any threat, therefore do not take what I am about to say as one. But we are all armed, and unless you let us depart, we will use weapons that never fail at close quarters. I am willing, as I said, to place a handsome donation in your coffers; if that fails, we must even forget your sacred calling, and fight our way out."

The superior's face blanched with rage at this daring defiance.

But what could he do?

"We have no wish to detain you here; perhaps we may accept your offering to our Lady and let you depart in peace. We want no bloodshed in these sacred precincts, nor do we brook intrusion."

"For the intrusion I apologize, sir. I indeed regret it—bloodshed can be avoided—let us go."

The superior waved his hand, spoke a few words to the priests, four of whom, two abreast, slowly turned and walked along the corridor.

"Follow them," said the superior.

"Keep a sharp look out," said Captain Day, in English, to his companions, and followed.

Then he counted out a fair sum in gold, and presented it with a show of deference that did him credit as a diplomatist.

The superior took it, and with still more credit as a diplomatist, the moment the heavy outer doors of the monastery had clanged behind the unwelcome visitors, ordered three of his priests to leave by a secret exit, and warn the authorities that a band of foreigners, who had broken into the monastery, were at large.

He was particular that the authorities should be given to understand that these same foreigners had broken into the monastery with the purpose of robbery.

Sacrilege and burglary.

No two light crimes in a country governed by Romish Spaniards—a country that was the birthplace of the Inquisition, and other pleasant devices for stopping freedom of religious thought.

Had Day known what was in store, it is possible he would have wished himself back again under the too easy protection of the *gens d'armes*.

"Beppo," said he to the boy, "run with this penciled note to my ship. Let no one but one of my crew see it. Officers are on board—find means to avoid them."

The boy hurried away right willingly.

"Now," said Day, "I propose we separate, and meet near the landing. I have ordered the vessel to run out to sea."

"But how about the *gens d'armes* on board? The *Twilight* is embargoed."

"If I haven't men enough to pitch them into the hold, or overboard, the sooner the ship goes to the devil the better."

"But which is the way, sir?" asked Will. "I'm lost here."

"So am I—pretty nearly—but—how—what is all this excitement about—the tramp of measured soldiers or *gens d'armes*! by Heaven! I should not wonder if we were betrayed! Hide quickly, all of you! Hide anywhere till they pass!"

Barracoa was not remarkable for its superfluity of gas light any more than it was for sweetness.

The porches of the doors afforded some shelter—Day and his companions scattered.

Will rushed into a little courtyard, and threw himself down under the shadow of the wall.

Day lit a cigarette, and strolled jauntily along, humming a Spanish bacchanalian air.

He trusted to his perfect accent in Spanish to pull him through, forgetting that his attire was a little out of the way for a blue-blooded Spaniard.

The steady tramp—tramp came closer. A file of *gens d'armes* hove in sight.

Day still hummed and smoked, and swaggered towards them.

"Two minutes will decide!" he muttered; "liberty or limbo."

He was wrong, for once; in thirty seconds there was a stern order for him to "halt!"

He came to a stand, and as the officer approached doffed his hat in true Spanish style, and waited.

"Where go you, senor?" asked the officer.

"Ah, my friend capitano, you should never ask that question of a gentleman late at night,"

answered Day, banteringly. "It might compromise a lady."

"Caramba, senor, it is my duty, to-night?"

"To compromise a lady?" asked Day, innocently.

"To stop all strangers."

"Ah, senor, the capitano is a gentleman, and we gentlemen of Spain never compromise the ladies; senor, the capitano is as gallant as he should be."

Now senor the capitano was not a captain, and therefore sucked in this flattery like honey; but senor the capitano was not quite satisfied.

"Have you seen a party of foreigners?" he asked.

"Of the male gender?"

"To the devil with them—yes!"

"I saw a party—not a large one?" and he waited for a reply with the most provoking coolness.

Senor the capitano felt very much like swearing in a way that would not become a gallant.

"No; not half a dozen."

"Three or four?"

"Yes."

"I passed them five minutes ago. They talked in detestable English. I always know the English."

"Lead me to where you saw them, senor, and I shall show you much gratitude."

Day winced at this, but he could not very well refuse.

He said certainly, and offered senor the capitano a cigarette. It was declined.

The march was resumed in ominous silence, and to further his purpose, the officer signed to his men to keep well in the rear, so that the senor should be seen before the officers.

Day was grateful for this.

"They will recognize my footsteps, and if they show themselves a lowly uttered word will send them under cover."

So he went on, humming still louder.

Yearly recognized his captain's footsteps, and called to Will:

"He's back, Merryman; guess the other fellers are off the scent."

"All right," replied Will, with a laugh. "I felt like a rabbit with the pointer on my track," and showed himself.

So did Yearly.

"Back, both of you!" cried Day.

His voice reached the ears of senor the capitano, and his eyes had beheld a shadow flit out from an adjacent porch.

He turned, and called, furiously:

"Double quick—march—fix bayonets!" and rushed forward.

"Malediction!" cried Day, with his hand on his revolver.

"Surrender!" cried the officer, with his sword at Day's breast.

"To the devil with you!" thundered Day, and with a sudden movement, too quick for the officer to thwart the act, he tore the sword from his grasp.

"Fight for it!" cried Day, "or you'll be spitted, both of you!"

Will and Yearly leaped out from cover.

Both drew their revolvers as they came face to face with the *gens d'armes*.

They recognized the nature of the weapons that were menacing them at once, and stopped short.

"Present!" yelled the officer, strangling with rage. "Shoot them down!"

"He's ordered those devils to fire!" cried Day, in the same breath.

The bayonets that had been at a level with our hero's waist were raised, the muskets placed to the shoulders, and the officer, though Day had got him by the throat, yelled out:

"Fire!—never mind me—fire!" and the blinding flashes that lit up the scene for an instant, was an answer that repaid him for his devotion to his cause.

CHAPTER IX.

ENVELOPED IN FLAMES.

URIAH BRAINTREE had watched from a safe distance the ending of the affair in the hostel, that is, he saw the *gens d'armes* enter and remain while neither Will nor Captain Day came out.

He lurked around until the gang of cut-throats and swindlers were driven out—one of them, a short, thick-set man, with a decidedly nautical appearance, separated himself from the rest, and him Uriah followed.

When they had reached a sufficiently secluded spot, Uriah tapped him lightly on the shoulder.

The man turned around fiercely.

"Ah, it is you," he growled in English, so very

much broken that it was pretty hard to connect the pieces. "Beast!"

"What do you mean?" asked Uriah, considerably astonished at being addressed in that manner.

"You English pig!" For I must tell you that in these European cities where our language is not spoken, the people have rather original notions of America and Americans, if, indeed, they have ever heard of this great geographical slice of the universe at all.

Uriah felt a good deal like resenting this, and made a gesture of menace.

"Bah!" retorted the Spaniard, with contempt; "you one liar!"

"I wasn't a liar!"

"You say they no armed; you want their throat cut; they have no too much money—ugh, go devil you. Bah!" and he spat at Uriah with infinite disdain, and turning on his heel, walked away.

Uriah stood thunder-stricken.

He had picked up this rascal by chance, and over some vile wine had fired his mind with an account of the wealth Day had concealed about his person.

Uriah dared not return to the *Twilight*, and now he found himself alone in this distant town unable to understand a word that was said to him unless he met someone who could speak English.

Money he had none. He wandered about the dismal street during the night, until so tired that he was glad to crouch up in a doorway.

The next day brought its heavy hunger and no way of appeasing it. He tried begging; but Barracoa was full of beggars, and he excited no comment or notice beyond his being a foreigner.

Another night and a second day of this helpless loafing, and Uriah began to look like a scarecrow.

His feelings can well be imagined when the pitiful sneak crept into a corner and blubbered heartily.

At this the irrepressible small boy—and they are to be found all over the world—gathered around him and hooted; from that they went on to pulling at his garments, and when in sheer desperation he charged them, they scattered for a minute, only to return with ammunition gathered from the gutters, and pelted him till he fairly took to his heels.

"I'll cut their hearts out," he muttered, "if I only could get 'em one at a time; see if I wouldn't."

But he did not get them one at a time, so could not gratify his longing for that cheerful form of dismemberment of the human species.

Not having looked to see what direction he took, and not yet knowing much about where it would lead to if he had, Uriah found himself near the docks.

The thought struck him that here lay his only chance.

Some English or American craft was sure to be here. He might work his passage home.

"Why did I not think of that before?" he wondered. "I don't like the sea. I believe it's all lies that's wrote about boys being born sailors. I'd rather be a burglar or a sneak thief."

He muttered this with an unctious that must have given him some inkling that he was born for the penitentiary.

A boy, or man, in fact, in a foreign port, especially one where his language is not spoken, stands infinite better chances of "getting a ship" than in their own country.

Casualties occur every day that shorten the number of ships' crews, and the masters are frequently mightily pleased when they can fill a gap with a willing hand who speaks their own tongue.

A brig had put in here for repairs and provisions, and Uriah went on board.

He saw the mate, a coarse, burly fellow, not one remove in refinement from the coarsest man before the mast.

"What the blazes is that you say?" he asked, not quite catching the exact meaning of Uriah's queries.

"I've been left behind here, and want to work my passage back to America."

"Been to sea?"

"Well, I guess, cap; I couldn't be here without, my home being in New York," with a grin.

"I'm not the cap, young fellow, and there's plenty of ways of getting here as a stowaway, or something worse. I mean, have you done a sailor's work?"

"Yes, sir."

"There ain't much of the sailor in *your* hulk,

rig or figure head; but you can stay and see the old man; he'll be aboard soon."

Uriah looked after the surly mate, and was inclined to mention the fact that he was hungry; but there was a gleam in the mate's eye that forbade it.

So he sat down on a water-cask, and chewed a piece of rope yarn, while the internal commotion of his empty stomach could be heard across the deck.

The "old man," as the mate had politely termed the captain, did not impress Uriah any more than the mate had done.

In reality he was a bluff, kindly old fellow—a sailor to the core, and a good navigator, not overstocked with education or literary lore. But he had his responsibilities and worries. Time and hardships had blunted his sympathies, and experience had made him skeptical.

He went on the principle that a man is worthy his hire. If not, that he was a loafer.

"Wal," he said, "I'm short-handed, that's a fact—lost two on the voyage—Java fever—you ken ship ef you like. I'll see what you'll do tomorrow, when we start."

Uriah was as grateful as his rat-like nature would permit him to be.

He was going home. How he had got there was a matter of indifference. What he might make on the way would be decided by circumstances.

It was not a large ship. Fourteen hands all told, which was not her full complement, in spite of her smallness.

When they set sail, Uriah found something or nothing to do on deck, and worked assiduously at it, bobbing about from place to place—in fact, laying hold of a rope whenever any one else laid hold of one.

But this could not last.

Out at sea there are changes of wind and water that bring the men tumbling out of their berths and up aloft at an instant's notice.

The first at the spot where the duty lays have to go aloft. There is no waiting to see whether you are wanted or not.

The second day, or rather night, there was a sudden order for all hands to shorten sail.

The men were up quickly and willingly, except Uriah.

He "funked," as he always did, and now skulked. The mate caught him at it, and with an oath and a kick, ordered him aloft to help to clew the fore-top sail.

He whined and said he never had been aloft.

"What's that to me, you lubberly swine!" and the mate lifted a rope's end.

Uriah skipped and crawled shiveringly up the ratlines, determined to put an end to being sent aloft again.

"I'll pretend to fall out of the rigging," he said, inwardly, and half way up he pretended.

He caught one of the halyards with one hand, waited till the ship lurched, and rolled off, expecting to let himself down a little lightly, but the halyard became unlashd, and he fell with a crash, striking the mate as he fell.

"Why, you shirking, lubberly thief, you did that purposely," cried the mate, and in spite of Uriah's yells, he kicked him down the fore-castle hatchway, and then ordered him to come on deck again or—

"By —," cried he, "I'll pitch you overboard!"

From that moment the mate—as the sailors have it—was down on him; not from any inordinate brutality of nature, but because he saw through him; so did most of the men, and he was unpopular throughout the vessel.

In the fore-castle they seldom spoke to him save in jeers, or to drive him out with a curse. He had the most uncomfortable, darkest and remotest bunk the ship possessed. To get his mess in peace, he had to slink away from the rest like a beaten cur, and find a corner behind a bale of goods, where he could swallow his meals in wretched isolation.

He had lived in subdued fear on the dashing *Twilight*, merely an outcast. Here every hour of his life was an hour of misery.

His cowardice, his meanness of character and his vindictiveness, which showed itself in a thousand and nine ways, brought upon him the open dislike of all.

If he had been anything but a human rat, he would have felt his despicable humiliation to such an awful extent, that he would have gone to the officers and his messmates, confessed himself entirely unfit for duty aloft, asked their consideration, and offered to make up in some way by performing such offices as were in his power, or keep a watch for a sick messmate, or any of them in fair turn, if they would take his place aloft.

Sailors are not ungenerous.

Had they still continued to despise him, they would at least have pitied him.

But he sniveled instead. He complained to the captain. He threatened them with the law, all to no avail.

Then he turned morose and plotted revenge.

A coward, if he has the heart of an assassin, can be dangerous, then.

They were pretty nearly home, when he was ordered to assist the cook, who had scalded one of his hands.

The devil was at Uriah's shoulder. A chance had come.

The cook was one of the bitterest enemies, and now no sooner did he conceive his *modus operandi*, than he put it into execution.

On the galley stove was a huge iron pot or boiler, containing some eighteen or twenty pounds of fat pork, almost cooked, and with two inches of boiling fat floating on the top.

His plan was to watch his opportunity, and if possible, when the cook's back was turned, to upset the boiler into the fire and escape.

The galley was built on the spar-deck forward, with an open doorway on either side. The cook stood instructing him how to manage the dinner.

Presently he went and looked into a stew pan, containing something for the captain and officers.

"You'd better skim that pork," he said; "and I guess as it's time to put the cabbage in."

Uriah grunted some sort of a reply.

"Well, do it," growled the cook, whose hand pained him, and who did not like the way dinner was progressing.

Uriah removed the lid of the boiler, cast a quick glance at the cook, took the huge utensil by the handles both sides of the boiler, and tilted it over.

There was a burst of flame like an explosion—a cry from the cook; but, oh—what an appalling yell from Uriah—what a heart-wrung shriek of agony!

The burst of flame had literally filled the galley. It flew into his face, and caught his hair. The burning oil ran over his arms and down his legs.

Shrieking, he dropped the boiler—shrieking, he threw himself out of the galley, followed by the flaming grease, and rolled in blind agony upon the deck, unnoticed by all, for the galley had taken fire, and all hands were called to save the ship.

CHATTER X.

A FATAL SHOT.

CAPTAIN DAY was staggered at the awful turn events had taken.

Adventurer as he was, he had always avoided anything approaching lawlessness, and when he called upon Will and the mate to defend themselves, he had hoped their determined attitude would have averted bloodshed.

His horror can be understood, when he saw his mate fall, at the same time as the two *gens d'armes* received wounds that disabled them.

How Will escaped a mortal wound no one can say. He was hit, though.

"Fool, this is your doing!" hissed Day, and to prevent the officer causing any further harm, he struck him with the pommel of the sword he had taken from him, and knocked him senseless.

"We must get away," he said. "The whole place will be alive with these infernal officers."

"Listen—see, cap'n. There's a lot of men coming towards us."

"To the rescue!" sang out a voice in English.

"Friends," said Day, grimly, and the *gens d'armes*, who were tending their leader and companions, dropped their arms in token of surrender, until reinforcements should arrive.

Needham came rushing up at the head of fifteen of the crew.

"Captain!" he called.

"Ay, I'm here," answered Day, who was leaning over the mate; "curse them, they've done for him!"

"What?"

"Yes; he's dead. There's no help for it. The safety of the whole crew depends upon us leaving him here."

"Poor fellow!"

"We might try and carry him to the ship," said the boatswain, Monday.

"Try! We must get! What have you done, Needham?"

"Slipped the cable, and run the *Twilight* out."

"And the *gens d'armes* who were on board?"

"Shoved 'em down the hold, and secured the hatches."

"Good! let us hurry."

"Shall we separate?"

"No; things have gone too far now for us to back down; we must fight our way on board, if driven to it."

Captain Day was desperate enough when driven to the wall. He did not consider that he was to blame in this affair, any more than that he was the cause of it.

The sailors, ripe for anything now that blood had been spilled, kept a sharp lookout for the enemy.

The lateness of the hour helped them, inasmuch as very few people were abroad, and they, on seeing so large a number of armed men, prudently kept out of the way.

At the landing, where a large boat lay moored, the first sign of opposition confronted them—a small posse of police.

They deployed into line, and imagined they were going to effectually bar Captain Day's passage.

Captain Day thought differently.

"Fall in three abreast," he said, "and follow me; give yourselves room for action, but if you crowd these fellows smartly, my lads, you could overcome them, and disarm them without drawing on them."

Then he walked boldly up to the officer till the order came to:

"Halt!"

"Well?"

"Surrender, all of you, or I'll fire!"

"My friend," answered Captain Day, "you see my men are equally as well armed as yours. We are the stronger in numbers, and determined to embark. The moment your men place their muskets at the present, my men will fire into you."

"We are here to do our duty."

"And we are here to fight our way to the boat; now, lads, charge them all together."

The last part of the sentence was addressed rapidly, and in a low voice, to the *Twilight's* men, in English.

They conceived the meaning of the words before they were fully uttered, and obeyed them.

With a frightful impetus they threw themselves upon the *gens d'armes*, and before a shot could be fired, bore them down.

Some were hurled into the water, while three of the sailors were dragged in with them.

As far as they were concerned, that went for nothing. They were in their natural element.

The officer made a desperate resistance, but the powerful captain of the *Twilight* had got him in hand, and an iron hand it was to be in, at that.

A few curses, fewer shouts and cries, and the tussle was over. A few stab wounds given and received, and then while half a dozen of those who were not injured covered their retreat, the wounded and the rest embarked in a large open boat.

The rest jumped in when the others were safe, and pulled out for deep water as only men who are rowing for salvation can pull.

The *Twilight* was already out of the harbor, and the boat's crew had all their work cut out to come up with her between this and daylight.

"Are you badly hurt, Merrymac?"

"No, sir."

"Well, we've got out of the mess so far pretty well, but for the loss of one officer."

"But," said Needham, "do you not expect to be chased?"

"Pretty sure to," smiled Day, "but you see this place isn't like a principal seaport, where they've armaments afloat and ashore, and revenue boats steering around at all times and places."

"But should the authorities telegraph for a war sloop, or find a revenue boat coasting about?"

"With the war sloop I should simply defeat them by strategy; a revenue boat, if it gave me any trouble, I should sink."

"Sink! How?"

"Oh, my friend Frank, there is more on board the *Twilight* than comes between Heaven and your sweet knowledge."

"But they would brand you as a pirate."

"Let them brand. It would be just as bad, and worse, to be taken now than if I resisted. They may call me outlaw for resisting capture on the high seas, but having committed no murder, nor taken or destroyed any vessel, they could scarcely substantiate the charge of piracy. Still, it is a matter of indifference if they do. For'ard there—keep a sharp lookout. Halloo, there she is."

"Yes. If danger was not attached to such a proceeding, I would suggest signaling them," said Needham, quietly.

"Better not; they'll only crawl along until all chance of our coming up with them is supposed to be over. Give way, my lads."

Give way they did, and the boat's prow hissed through the water, and in ten minutes they were rewarded by seeing that they were coming up with the *Twilight* hand over hand.

But their sudden joy received a shock.

Will, who had all along kept his gaze on the track in the rear of them, now for the first time uttered a cry.

"What's the matter, Merrymac?" asked Day.

"Look, sir; we are followed."

Day turned very hastily. He had expected to be followed, but he wanted to discover the nature of the craft that had undertaken the chase.

"All safe?" sang out a voice from her deck.

"No—hurry up!"

To those who have never seen sailors go to work in a moment of peril, it would be interesting to take a long voyage and pray for a favorable opportunity to do so.

The expedition with which the boat was laid alongside, like a big leech, and the men clambered on deck, baffles description.

But it had necessitated some delay, and the steam launch had gained upon them.

Day's presence of mind would have made him a hero as commander of a war vessel.

"Up with those jollies!" he said, (meaning the *gens d'armes*). "Into the boat with them, and cut it adrift. The launch will have to lay to for them."

"I am not acquainted with these latitudes, sir, are the nights much cooler?"

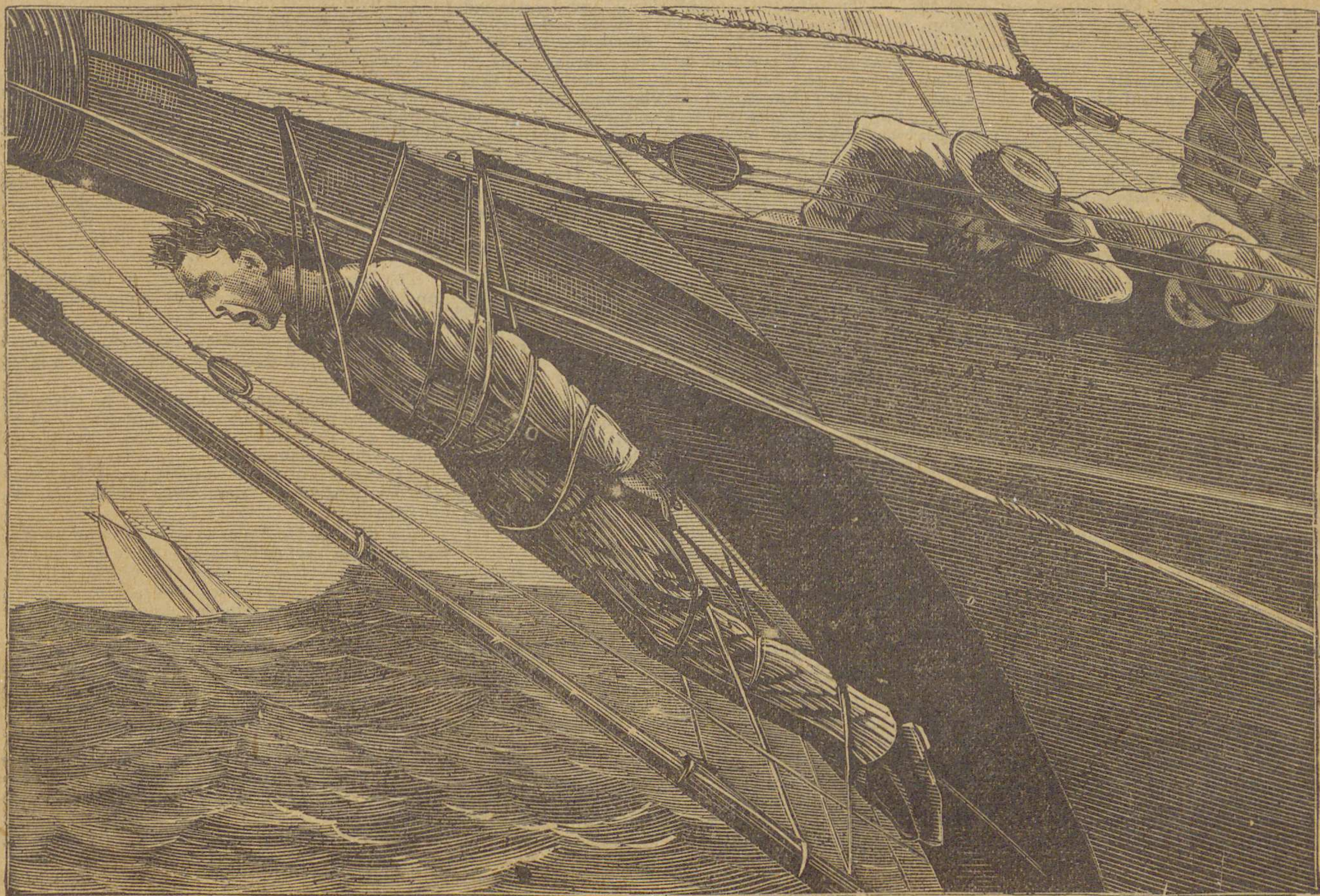
"Not very much, but sufferable."

The speakers were Captain Day and our hero, robust again, and looking much older.

On the poop of the *Twilight* sat a lovely girl, with Needham leaning over the back of her low easy chair.

Miss Medfield, who had been so surreptitiously taken on board in New York, but no longer Miss Medfield.

Captain Day had managed to elude the revenue cutter, and though afterwards overhauled by a Spanish man-of-war, had so altered the *Twilight*, and by means of forged papers so hoodwinked the don, that he was allowed to go, with many apologies, as an English trader.



"Now, wolf, are you satisfied that you're leading the ship you wanted to? Now listen to me, to what I say to my men."

It was not a man-of-war; it was too large for a rowboat.

It was too swift for a yacht under sail, besides which, there was no sign of canvas flying.

What was it?

He kept his eyes fixed so intently upon it, that they grew dim and wavered.

He shaded them with his hand a moment, took a sweeping survey of the horizon, and the star-spangled sky, then brought his eyes slowly back to the object of his anxiety.

A slight shower of sparks, a white disc like a handful of white wool thrown suddenly in the air above a little black column, and the truth was out.

A steam launch was on their track.

"It might be worse," he said, philosophically; "she is not armed;" but how many men she had on board who were well armed, he could not conjecture.

"Now, lads, once on board the *Twilight* and we can give her a reception. If she overtakes us in this cockleshell, she will run us down."

The hardy fellows being alive to that fact, they made the water fly like a cataract from under the boat.

Needham and Will simultaneously uttered an ejaculation, and the men understood the cause of it. The *Twilight* had put about and was sailing on the port tack to intercept the boat.

Whoever was in charge had seen through his night glasses, not only the boat, but the steam launch.

It was a short but gallant pull now, and the *Twilight* was hove to in splendid style.

The men, safe on board their beloved craft, laughed at this.

The *gens d'armes* were hurried on deck and helped over the side in a manner that made them find the boat, though it nearly lost two of them their senses.

"Cut them adrift!" and the boat floated astern as the *Twilight* was brought up in her courses, and forged ahead, with a triumphant dip and bound that elicited a cheer from the men.

A stiff breeze was blowing, and she made grand headway.

"Safe, I think!" cried Day, but while he was uttering the words, there came a boom—a hissing and whistling in the air.

A shot dashed the wind in his face, so close did it pass him, and a shower of splinters flew in all directions, wounding whoever they struck. Will uttered a startled cry of pain.

"My God! it is an armed launch, after all!" cried Captain Day. "Douse the lights, fore and aft, lads! Down, every one of you—here comes another—Merrymac—Merrymac!"

No answer.

Day groaned.

"Devil with them!" cried Day; "am I to lose the ablest hand on board? Curses! I would give a year of my life to answer that shot!"

CHAPTER XI.

A STORY, AND WHAT ENDED IT.

"ALMOST a dead calm, but the worst part of the burning hot day is over."

He had made some long voyages since then. Had got rid of his valuable cargoes, and while so doing had given Miss Medfield away, and she and Needham were married.

"By which," he said, with his quiet smile, "I serve a friend and pay a grudge I owe an enemy."

And Frank knew he meant the old rascal who had sent the *Andromeda* to sea to founder.

"As there is no urgent need for us to return," he went on, "what do you say to a long and speculative cruise? to you, Mrs. N., it will be a pleasure trip, and rest assured the *Twilight* will not be made incommodious by heavy and lumbering cargoes. A man with his wits about him, and money, can realize a fortune in merchandise that could be stowed in the bottom of the lower hold or hidden in the cabins. We will run into the Pacific, have a peep at the China sea and its islands, and trust to Providence for health and wealth."

Everybody agreed; every man on board received a share of the proceeds of their captain's transactions, and therefore were more than willing.

So now we find them happy as a picnic party, lying becalmed in lat. 11 min. 13 deg., long. 113 N., or in other words, somewhere between Macclesfield Bank and the North Islands in the China sea.

"I think," said Day, continuing the conversation that I have just interrupted, "that this will be my last voyage in the filibustering business. I am tired of it."

"It is dangerous, captain," answered Will, thoughtfully.

"It is more, Will, my boy. It is dishonest."

Will looked up in extreme surprise, but made no answer.

"That Barrocoa affair alone is sufficient to take me to prison for the rest of my life; besides that, I endanger the liberty and lives of all of you."

"But, sir, the authorities there were wrong."

"Not from their point of view, Will."

"But there is no danger now likely to come of that affair."

"Will, the right road is the longest and best, mark me. I look upon you as a younger brother; I have been your friend—you deserve the friendship of a better man."

"Captain Day," exclaimed Will, with emotion, "don't talk like that! You have been good to me—you are good in my eyes," and here emotion, that he could neither explain nor control, checked his speech.

Day laid his hand kindly on Will's shoulder; they were walking up and down the deck amidships.

"Will, lad, I have been thinking deeply lately—more than is good for me, perhaps. If it only brings idle regrets of the past it is not good for me, and I fear it is too late to make me reform."

"Don't say that, captain."

"You are young yet, Will; that is no fault—would to God we could always remain young, but we cannot. I should like to talk to you a little to-day, Will—shall I say it is pure selfishness?—I am in the humor and it pleases me; but if the errors of one will save another from like errors, or worse ones, those errors may not have been committed in vain."

"That is true."

"You know, Will, I never give advice."

"I know it, sir."

"Shall I tell you why?"

"May I venture to offer my experiences?"

"Certainly."

"Well, captain, young people fancy they know all that has been done, and can be done, by past generations. They enter the field fresh and sanguine, and think they will revolutionize the world, and generally begin by pitying their parents for what they are conceited enough to suppose faults voluntarily committed from the want of the knowledge we youngsters in our own estimation possess."

"Good, Will. Splendid!" and Captain Day laughed; "but I will give you my reason more tersely. Those who really want advice, won't take it when given; those who think they don't want it, it is no use giving it to."

"In other words, the rising generation think they know more than the declining one."

"Good again!"

"That is not my case, I hope, cap; you know the old truism: 'He who knows best how to obey, knows how to command,' or something to that effect?"

"Yes, and therefore I should like to say something to you. Will, I know I am not sowing seed on barren soil, but for God's sake, be warned by what I shall tell you. The story is short. It is my own."

"Cap—"

"Let me preface it with a remark: Never let trouble or sorrow drive you out of the straight road of life. Men make it an excuse for dissipation, for warring with society, and defying the law. It is a mistake in which you cut off your nose to spite your face, and what should we say, if we saw a man do that!"

"Laugh at him."

"Well, Will, I did it—morally. I was in the navy, and had a friend, one Edgar Elmhurst. It is somewhat the old story, we both loved the same girl—too young at that time, though it is not many years ago—to marry. I knew it, as he knew it. I never treated him as a rival—he secretly hated me as his. When out in the West Indies, he got sick, and he was invalided home. I was on shore, dining with the garrison at Gibraltar. There was a senior officer of mine there who hated Elmhurst, and spoke slightly of Edgar, accused him of shamming illness, and impugned his courage. I defended my friend, and in the heat of the moment, struck my superior. He would not fight, but reported me. I explained. I was a favorite, and the commodore put the case to arbitration—would I be tried by naval court-martial, or leave the ship? I left the ship. After that I went on a traveling tour, working my way by slow degrees home. The news of my 'dismissal' had long since preceded me. I was received coldly. I had been slandered most grossly; it had been reported that I had

acted dishonorably to my brother officers; that dissipation, drunkenness and gambling were the primary cause of my downfall. I traced the slander to its source. I found it emanated from—Edgar Elmhurst."

A sort of click in his throat made Day pause for an instant.

"Wondering at the cause, I sought the lady of our mutual loves, Miss Dixon. I understood all when I found her in the person of Mrs. Elmhurst. I immediately insisted on a court of inquiry. I was reprimanded for my conduct in striking a superior officer, but reinstated as a first lieutenant, with commission as acting captain. That gave the lie to the slander. Well, the end soon came. I met Elmhurst at Malaga, a place famous for grapes, by-the-way. There I forced him into a duel, and killed him."

"The affair was hushed up and I returned, sought his widow, and by degrees renewed my old protestations of love. She had a little boy a year old. When that boy was three, or nearly three years, I succeeded in persuading my false friend's widow into marrying me, and we were happy; but only for a few months; some one who knew my secret told her. I shall never forget her after that. She faced me like a tigress, hid her boy from me, and swore never to live under the same roof, never to countenance me or see me. She kept her word—she fled—and I threw up my commission."

Will's heart melted, and he became violently agitated.

"Then I took to this mode of life—it was distraction. A short while before I met you I heard she was in New York. I knew she had a sister in Australia. In New York I could find no trace of her."

He paused. Will had groaned.

"What ails you?"

"Good Heavens!" he burst out, "a Mrs. Elmhurst and her boy—under that same name—were on the passengers' register, booked for Australia, on board the rotten *Andromeda*."

"Good God!" cried Day; and then recovering himself: "Then she is lost to me in this world, and—"

Needham approached.

"Excuse me, you two confidentials, do you see where we are—and what are those boats doing? Feluccas, are they not?"

"Get my glass, Will."

Dusk had come on, and here night follows swiftly on the heels of day.

"Yes," answered Day, when he had scanned the objects of Needham's anxiety. "Feluccas manned by Malays. I guess they have just run out from behind the peninsula."

"They are pretty well manned."

"They generally are," answered Day, a shadow darkening his handsome face. "Take your wife below, Frank. Curse this calm! Return to me. I will keep a lookout on them."

"You seem anxious; surely there is no harm in them?" said our hero, who had been closely watching the captain's face.

"There are too many, Will, for my liking."

"But in these days there are no pirates."

"So it is generally supposed, but these people are pirates by nature, by tradition, by inclination. If they know that no man-of-war is present a merchant ship is not safe."

Will was incredulous.

"And still more of them come—by Heaven! they mean to attack us, and plunder the vessel under cover of the darkness."

"What is the commotion?" asked Needham.

"Get your glasses, and watch those fellows over there."

"Why, they're in stronger force than when I left the deck."

"Yes—a deck we shall have to fight for, Frank, while a plank holds."

"My God! and the women?"

"Keep your wife and her maid in the middle cabin. Tell them to remain concealed. If the worst comes you must put them down below."

Needham trembled.

Here in the hour of luxurious indolence and ease, when all on board felt as if they were far away from any single one of the world's cares, they were suddenly menaced by a danger far greater than any they had ever yet been menaced with.

"Pipe all hands on deck," said Day.

Then when the men mustered aft:

"My lads, you see those feluccas forming in line ahead?"

"Ay—ay, cap!"

"Well, they are manned by a horde of Malay pirates, who intend to enrich themselves at our expense."

"Will, they, by thunder!" said Monday, taking the quid from his cheek and heaving it overboard.

The men cheered.

"Well, lads, you know what to do. Yank those two guns out of the hold, get up what arms we have on board, and plenty of powder—we'll try our luck."

The men cheered again.

But not loud enough to be heard by the silent, stealthy enemy who were coming out of their lair, a-thirst for blood.

Never did vessel undergo so rapid a change as did the *Twilight*, though unseen from without.

"Let go the anchor!" commanded Captain Day.

"Furl sails—be easy about it, lads! Cover the guns with tarpaulins, so that they may not be seen from the feluccas."

The men rather enjoyed this.

They did not know the actual extent of the danger—Captain Day did.

"Needham, see that the gangways are ready to be shifted at any moment. Merrymac, see that second gun planted properly amidship, so that if we're driven aft we shall have a welcome for those yellow dogs; as little noise as possible, my lads."

"Ay—ay, sir!"

Boots were kicked off as being useless incumbrances, hats thrown aside, hammock netting rigged to repel boarders, and small arms carefully loaded and concealed, while stands of rifles were distributed around the masts.

The feluccas had still increased in numbers, and now came steadily on in three lines of attack.

They approached slowly, waiting, apparently, for that sudden darkness which is peculiar to these latitudes.

They were armed well, as far as quantity, went. The most deadly weapon at close quarters being the creese—a short sword with zig-zag blade—double edged.

"Down, all of you!" said Day, and the men of the *Twilight* threw themselves down under the bulwarks.

The *Twilight* had a most peaceful and inviting appearance, and as darkness enveloped her, the enemy signaled each other, and then, with the double line of long sweeps (the sails were down) they propelled the feluccas along with a silent velocity that would have unnerved a less experienced sailor than Captain Day.

The nearest line of the enemy was making for the port gangway, forward.

Behind this, one of the guns was placed, filled with balls, and the muzzle depressed to effect a sweeping fire.

"Ready with the gangway!" said Day. "Merrymac, prepare to fire; when I say 'now,' let the gangway open, take off the tarpaulin, and blaze away!"

The Malays, not expecting opposition until they boarded, came on in a close line.

"Now!" cried Day.

It was like one of those scenic effects in a pantomime—a portion of the bulwark yawned—the grinning muzzle of the gun protruded, and a flash and roar broke the peace and stillness that had so long reigned, and so the fearful carnage commenced.

CHAPTER XII.

SINKING OF THE FLOATING ISLAND.

The whispered word spoken by Mrs. Elmhurst to Portquarter Jack had simply an electric effect upon him.

He recoiled from Hazle, and with wonder depicted upon his face, said, humbly:

"The lady's right, Mr. Cassidy. We'd best leave him to her."

Cassidy concurred.

The island still drifted on the masses of seaweed, breaking away from it by degrees, not in strips or strands, but in large patches, and with a suddenness that made Cassidy investigate the matter.

Investigation revealed the same dreadful cause.

The island was slowly sinking from its continuous lessening in bulk.

Cassidy communicated this to Jack; the old fellow stroked his hair-covered chin.

"Yes, sir," he said, slowly, "I knows it."

"What is to be done?"

Uncle Jack pondered.

What could be done?

"We've nothing to help us," he answered: "even if we could lash the island together, we

have nothing to lash it with; an' then, yer see, Mr. Cassidy, it *couldn't* be lashed together—'cause why? it's a crumbling away from underneath—the bottom, like."

"I feared it; but how do you know?"

"By standin' t'other end, an' lookin' inter the wake of it. Mr. Cassidy, can you tell me how the blamed thing floats at all?"

"If you examine the bottom of the holes the men dug to catch water, where they have dug deepest, you will find wood; perhaps centuries ago, a forest stood on the edge of the land we drifted from; a mass of the trees blown down into the sea by a fearful cyclone, lay in the shallow water, and became covered in time with sand and earth, so in due course the sea has worn away its foundation, just as in some instances it breaks away the land——"

"Ah, Mr. Cassidy," interrupted Portquarter Jack, with a dubious shake of the head, "that may be; but who can explain the workings o' natur?"

"Science is the book in which we read natural phenonoma."

"Very likely. I don't know nothing 'bout feenomy; but I'll be d—d if I can make out how a island can float!"

"But you have a proof of it—we're on one."

"Correct, sir; and that reminds me, them fish won't keep over long in the sun."

"Then we must try and smoke them."

"How?"

"By lighting a fire."

"Ah, Lord love ye, Mr. Cassidy! I hopes there ain't nothing wrong, sir."

"Wrong—how?"

"Mebbe ye don't feel wrong in your head, sir?"

"Nonsense, old friend; look up some of that fine see-weed we have scattered on the island; it is as dry as tinder."

"That may be; but how shall we light it?"

"How? by the sun."

"Stave in my—come—come, Mr. Cassidy."

"Come, indeed; just pile some of it up, and I will show you a thing or two."

Jack did as was desired, and Cassidy hurried back to Mrs. Elmhurst.

"Excuse me," he said, "but is your watch still about your person?"

"I think so," she answered, faintly, and then fumbled in the waistband of her dress, where the watch pocket was made.

The watch was there.

"I do not want it, only the glass; let me take it out—shall I? Thanks, Mrs. Elmhurst; I will try not to break it. Ah! this is perfect, just what I want—it is concave."

Then he took his own watch out and removed the glass.

There was a great disparity in the sizes of the two, but this did no harm.

He filled them with water, placed them close together, and held them firmly by the edges with his thumb and forefinger.

"Now you shall see," said he to Jack, who was still looking on like a puzzled schoolboy. Then he knelt by the little pile of sea-weed, and held the glasses over it so that the sun's rays fell upon them.

A bright disk appeared on the top of the inflammable pile, and Jack, watching it, saw it turn brownish, then beheld a little wreath of smoke, which grew denser, followed almost immediately by a thin flame.

"Well, may I be d—!" he cried, forcibly, and slapped his leg with such force that his hand went nearly through it.

You must remember how thin it was.

"Now," said Cassidy, "we'll cook some fish, and smoke the rest."

The news spread. The sailors gathered around the fire, and glowered silent gratitude upon the mate.

And now affairs began to improve. Fred tenderly cared for by Mrs. Elmhurst, soon recovered sufficiently to eat a little broiled flying fish.

But as the party improved, their only staple article of food decreased, and the chance of getting more was slender.

But they had gone through so much that they dared hope.

Towards the close of the unusually hot day, the floating island was found to be moving with uncomfortable force, whirling for a moment in a large circle, and then being shot along like a comet on a rampage.

Cassidy ran and knelt over the edge, and dipped his arm deep into the sea.

"We are in a fresh and much stronger current," he said; "where it will take us, God only knows."

"Mighty likely," said Uncle Jack, ruefully, "to the botom, at this rate."

"Hush, in Heaven's name," said Cassidy, with a glance towards Mrs. Elmhurst, who was near.

"Taint no use hidin' the truth," persisted Jack, in a lower voice. "This darned thing wat's been crumbling away in a calm sea, will go to pieces in this current—sides, it ain't goin' ter last always as calm."

Uncle Jack was simply echoing Cassidy's own thoughts.

Swept onward by this powerful current, the sponge like island trembled visibly.

Presently a loud cry from the men took Cassidy to the spot. The island had separated; not exactly in halves, but a large slice went off on a momentary independent cruise, on its own account, and then came whirling after the main body, like a child in the wake of its run-away mother.

Cassidy groaned.

The men threw themselves despairingly down on their faces. Mrs. Elmhurst with Eddy clasped in her arms, knelt between Topsy and Fred, and prayed fervently for succor.

So the night came on; not one of the unhappy castaways could sleep, and matters were made worse when night was half its age by the men rushing towards the center of the floating mass.

The water had begun to bubble up from beneath them where they lay.

This aroused Cassidy from his inertia.

"Mrs. Elmhurst—all of you—come here to the center. If we are doomed at last, let us at least die together."

So they crowded one near the other, a silent heap of human misery and despair, expecting every moment to hear the water surging over them, and to be dragged down in the vortex of the sinking mass that began to refuse to succor at last.

Morning brought with it a new gleam of hope.

A long line of land running out like the base of a V placed thus >.

Cassidy uttered a feeble shout.

The women raised their haggard eyes, but said never a word.

"If the current is only running in that direction, the island will yet save us."

Hours sped on—no one thought of hunger or thirst; their wistful gaze was fixed upon that prominent tongue of land.

But it was soon apparent that the current did not take them in that direction sufficiently near for their fast sinking island to come in contact with it.

"And we are rapidly sinking," wailed Cassidy, wildly. "My God—my God! and with land almost within our reach!"

Then a mad resolve came upon him.

"Mrs. Elmhurst," he said, "will you trust yourself to me? We must swim for it."

"It is our only chance," she said, brokenly.

"But my boy?"

"I'll take him," said Uncle Jack.

She looked at Hazle.

"I can swim well enough," said Fred.

Then Cassidy addressed the men. Two of the poor fellows could not swim, and would not trust themselves away from their temporary security.

Topsy howled, and refused to budge.

"Let us set them an example," said Cassidy. "See, the water is gaining rapidly upon us."

Then Mrs. Elmhurst, with a deep prayer, con-signed herself to him, and he plunged in.

Jack followed with Eddy, and then came two of the sailors and Fred.

They had miscalculated the distance, though, and in twenty minutes Cassidy found himself unequal to the task.

"It's all over," he moaned, as a piercing shriek told him that the floating island had gone under, dragging those who had remained down with it.

CHAPTER XIII.

SURROUNDED BY PIRATES—THE NIGHT ATTACK.

THE first shot fired, the first blood spilt, and the pirates swarmed the vessel, knowing full well that they must take it by sudden storm, or suffer fearful losses.

They had not counted on cannons.

Merchantmen do not carry them in these days.

Captain Day told the men to keep cool.

"Reload that gun," he said. "Haul it back out of sight."

"Captain Day," said Will, "may I go into the foretop with some men as sharp-shooters?"

"Yes, Merrymac. The cook and steward might be of more service there than down here."

Will uttered a wild cry of delight, called his men, gave each forty rounds of ammunition, and went up the rigging barefooted, like the rest.

"Ready there with cold shot to drop into the smaller boats," ordered Day. "Now, lads, stand firm; don't show yourselves till I give the word. Then be steady, and don't waste a shot!"

Every word he uttered was distinctly heard through the vessel.

A powerful voice always, it was more so now, pitched in a high, calm tone.

The men were in high glee.

The only true sailors in the world come of the Anglo-Saxon stock, and their contempt for the Malays was supreme.

Day knew the blood-thirsty ferocity of these Malays, though, if ever they got a footing on the deck.

The fleet of feluccas formed an immense circle now, to distract the fire of the *Twilight*. Captain Day trained the gun—double-shotted now—and brought it to bear on the largest of the Malay crafts.

The one that apparently contained the leader.

"If we had but another hour's light," said Day, taking the port fire from the hand of a sailor.

"Stand clear!"

Another fearful crash, a vast tongue of flame and wild roar, and Will saw the large felucca stagger, her foremast hurled far away, while nearly one-half the crew dropped idle, and a volley of screams and yells told of the havoc among its human freight.

"Now, lads, up with you! Concentrate your fire on the nearest craft! Blaze away!"

And they did blaze away. Yankee breech-loaders in Yankee hands kept up a scathing fusillade, and the Malays fell like fruit blossoms under a blight.

"Pick out the steersmen?" cried Will to his sharp-shooters.

"You bet, sir!" said they, cool as ducks in a pond.

Their fire was most effective, though they were not always enabled to see its direct effect.

That the slaughter among the pirates was dreadful no one could doubt. The deafening yells of the swarming mass simply rent the very air, and now the worst had come.

The feluccas dashed alongside, and in spite of the cannon balls rolled overboard and into them, the Malays, a creese held between their teeth, swarmed up the ship's sides and along its tightened cable like bees.

Day had been careful to warn the men not to use their revolvers till close quarters.

They used them now.

But as fast as the Malays fell others took their places, covered by a volley of iron slugs fired from the feluccas.

A few had gained the deck aft, but a body of the *Twilight's* men had been stationed there already to protect the gun and receive the boarders.

They did receive them at the rate of six to eight volleys a minute, and the deck ran with blood.

Hard fighting like this is exhausting, and Captain Day began to fear that they must be defeated.

He had a revolver in his left hand, and used a heavy cutlass in his right.

It was crimson to the hilt.

Attacked on all sides as he was, his men had no time to reload, and they saw with dismay that their second revolvers were being emptied, and the numbers of the dusky devils scarcely decreased.

"Charge them, lads!" cried Day.

And with a yell the gallant fellows drove the pirates off the decks.

Then came a lull.

The feluccas fell off, and firing ceased on both sides.

"Hurl these skunks overboard!" cried Day, wrathfully. "Dead or alive!"

And the Malays who strewed the *Twilight's* decks were hurled into the sea.

"Have we licked them?" asked Needham, who was bleeding from a deep wound in the arm.

"I fear not. They'll return in force. Reload all the small arms, lads, and the gun. If they board in force for'ard, let them come—remain quiet till they fill the fok'sel deck. Then fire

into them and open to port and starboard, so that we can use this gun aft—Merrymac!”

“Sir?”

“All well aloft?”

“All well so far, sir. Would you send up some more ammunition?”

“Ay—ay!”

Captain Day was right in his conjectures.

The Malays only drew off to wait till the night grew older, when they returned in small boats, while a number of them, armed only with the creese, swam to the vessel.

Day was warned by Will of the approach of the boats, but he remained calm.

This time it was a well concocted movement on the part of the Malays. They kept the larger feluccas within rifle range of the *Twilight*, and began a steady fire from their old muskets.

Had they possessed the improved weapon, not a sailor would dared to have shown his head above the bulwarks.

As it was, they made that proceeding so warm for the *Twilight's* crew, that Day ordered them to keep down.

Thus, before they knew it, the Malays were tumbling over the bows, throwing themselves down to avoid the fire from their own men, and then leaping up with a yell, made for the sailors.

The fight raged with redoubled fury now all along the deck, and the ship forward was alive with the demons.

Then Captain Day ordered his gallant lads to open and fall back, and discharged the gun, which was loaded with grape, at the on-rushing mass.

The havoc was fearful.

Those nearest this dreadful instrument of death were swept into the sea or shattered to pieces.

Then, with Day at their head, one half of the men rushed upon the confused and scattered mass, and drove them over the ship's side.

It was the last effort of resistance on the part of the Malays.

At the moment Day thought the victory won, a wounded pirate sprang up behind him and drove his creese into his back.

“My God! 'tis all over!” he cried, and throwing up his arms, fell heavily to the deck.

CHAPTER XIV.

DEATH OF CAPTAIN DAY.

LIKE Nelson's unparalleled victory of Trafalgar, which was won at the cost of that hero's life, the victory over those rapacious Malays was bought at a fearful price.

When the morning came, the vessel's decks were cleared, and among the heaps of Malays lay, sadly, too many of the *Twilight's* crew.

Of the wounded I will not speak. All on board—our hero included—were more or less carved or bulletted.

Of themselves they thought nothing.

It was of Captain Day.

He lay in his cabin, patient and calm, nursed by the lovely young Mrs. Needham and her husband.

“You can do nothing for me, my dear Frank,” he had said—“nothing but stop the flow of blood; I am dying, and I know it.”

Then when all that could be done was completed, he said:

“Take the ship out of this; get into the Pacific. Let me rest a little, I shall be stronger. I want to do something I have too long neglected; but I will sleep.”

A breeze having sprung up, they got the *Twilight* under weigh and made all sail out of the China sea.

When Captain Day awoke he asked for brandy, and then for Will.

Will came, with tears running down his cheeks.

He could not help loving the handsome, dashing fellow who now lay with death's brand upon his brow.

“Don't fret, Will; it's all over with me.”

“Don't say that, sir. Is there no hope—no way of saving you?”

“None! I would rather it should be so. I have drained the cup of life pretty well. It had begun to pall upon me long since. I am happy.”

“Oh, captain!”

“Think lightly of it, Will; I have my own views of death. They may not be the right ones. I believe that we simply melt back into the world from which we came. I think I have been punished pretty severely for my sins on earth—where's Frank?”

“Here,” answered Frank, promptly. Mrs. Needham was too overcome to witness the sad scene.

“Frank, give me my folding-desk. The one brass bound.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And get pen and ink—send for Monday and the steward to be on hand when called.”

Frank got the desk and placed it on the side of the bed.

“The key is in my pants pocket—get it and unlock the desk.”

Frank did as desired.

“Do you see a document—marked ‘my will?’”

“Yes, sir.”

Frank read the present will; it chiefly affected Mrs. Day, should she be alive, but dealt only with some personal property in New York.

“Are you ready to write at my dictation?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Go on, then.”

The codicil was a long one, in which he left our hero \$10,000 and an equal share in the ownership of the *Twilight*, with Francis J. Needham, to whom the rest of his money went.

There was a sum to be divided among the crew, while Monday, the second mate, and Messrs. Death and Devil, came in for a nice little sum.

“Frank,” said Day, when he had seen the codicil attested, after hearing its contents, “take care of Merrymac. I feel towards him as I would to a younger brother.”

“So do I, dear captain,” answered Frank, taking Will's hand heartily. “We shall never fall out, I'm sure.”

“You ought not. The *Twilight* is a fine vessel; stick to her, my friends.”

“While she has a plank that holds,” answered Frank.

Will was too overcome to speak; he could only sit with the captain's hand in his, and hide his face as well as his emotion, so as not to distress his generous friend.

“Don't take on, Will, lad; I'm happy; thank God that 'twas I instead of either of you who was destined to fall.”

“Let us hope we shall not lose you yet,” said Frank, who could not conceal his feelings; for Captain Day had been a tried and true friend to him.

The dying man smiled.

“False hope, Frank; I should like to hear the gun fired at sundown.”

“I'll go and give orders at once, sir.”

“Do. God bless you!”

Frank left the cabin, and the rest withdrew, save Will.

He detained him by a kindly pressure of the hand.

“Don't leave me, Will.”

“Oh, no—no, captain, not while you live. This is a cruel fate for you.”

“It is a just one; had I kept to my legitimate and peaceful calling, I should not have been here. No, Will, I have been a wrong-doer. The world is too prone to find excuses for such as I. Fiction makes heroes out of such material, and popular sympathy is with them. It is wrong.”

“Worse men hold their heads high in the world.”

“I know it; but they have to lay them in the dust and ashes of contrition and exposure sooner or later. Let my miserable later years be a warning, lad. You've the mak-

ings of a good man in you. Don't treat a mother's love lightly, and *never forget her advice in anything.*"

"I never will, Captain Day, should she be spared to me."

"You have enough to start you well in the world, Will, without drudgery; a fortune lies before you. Make commerce your study as well as sailing, and you will save money by it. Is it sundown yet?"

"No—no."

"Send for Frank and his wife; I want them here."

Frank, his wife, the mate and warrant officers crept to his cabin.

Mrs. Needham would not disturb him.

He breathed lightly and easily, and seemed peaceful.

Presently he opened his eyes.

"Sundown yet?" he asked.

"Not yet."

"Give me your hands—yours, too, my child—and be good to Frank always."

He seemed to relapse again.

Frank offered him stimulant, but he rejected it.

Again he awoke, and smiled.

"Is it——"

Boom came the report of the gun.

"Ah!" he sighed. "Sundown! God bless you all!" and with a smile that made his face simply beautiful, he expired.

Requiescat in pace.

CHAPTER XV.

RESCUED.

BUT for a brilliant thought of Uncle Jack's, Mrs. Elmhurst would assuredly have been lost.

"I'll relieve you," he cried. "Fred, hold the boy while Mr. Cassidy floats."

"Brave old friend," murmured Cassidy, as Jack relieved him of his burden.

Then they struck out for land, the stronger of the two sailors swimming by Jack's side to render him help when needed.

It was a long swim, but the sufferers reached land at last and lay exhausted on the grateful soil for full an hour.

Jack was the first to recover, and he almost sprang up for joy.

This was no barren, sandy, floating mass, but a luxuriant, fertile peninsula, apparently, with waving palms, twittering birds and long, fresh grass.

"Paradise!" he yelled, adding somewhat irreverently: "By thunder!"

Cassidy sat up and looked about him.

"Paradise, indeed," said he, and tried to run.

But that was going a little too far so soon.

But they dragged their weary limbs along, and by the time the others had recovered, returned to announce that they had found fresh water.

The party staggered on towards it and lay down by it after they had drank; but Cassidy and Jack, followed by Fred, went in search of food.

Birds were there in plenty, and so tame that they could be knocked down with long sticks.

By the same means that Cassidy had made a fire on the floating island, he made one here, and they supped heartily for the first time.

Supper and a rest restored Cassidy, and he and Jack went down to the shore, carrying fuel with them.

Here another fire was lit, and for two hours did they trudge to and fro—assisted now by the sailors—with fuel, till a beacon fire ten feet high was built up and blazing brightly.

They did not know what region they were in or what hope there was of a passing vessel in this latitude.

So Cassidy determined not to trust to that for help.

A long night's rest and a wholesome breakfast did

wonders for these poor castaways, and then Cassidy called the men together.

He lay the case before them in his simple and pointed way.

It was impossible to say how long they might have to make this place their home.

"Possibly we are on one of the many deserted islands of the South Pacific," he said, "and maybe so far out of the trading course used by vessels as to be left wholly on our own resources for years."

Then he pointed out the necessity of building a shelter for themselves and a secure retreat for Mrs. Elmhurst and her little boy.

The men assented, and they set to work that day.

Time went on, the watch-fire had been kept burning three weeks, damped in the day to make it emit only columns of black smoke, and blazing by night, and at the end of that time it found them in a sheltered dell.

A large, roughly made hut, sheltered by the branches of giant trees, and a lovely little bower for Mrs. Elmhurst had been erected.

All were gaining in health and strength and good looks. Fred especially, who had borrowed Uncle Jack's knife, and hacked his beautiful hair off short.

Cassidy's attentions to Mrs. Elmhurst were most marked, and by-and-by it brought about the first ill-feeling ever existing among them.

He was jealous of Hazle.

Hazle was her companion in all her walks. The only person who ever was permitted to linger long in her little bower.

The one upon whom she lavished unrestricted smiles, and once—fatal day—Cassidy heard her kiss him, and caught them clinging together in each other's arms.

His breast heaved with passion, but he dared not show it.

His hand sought his knife, but he dared not draw it.

"I can wait," he said, with a curse. "Was it for this I saved you from the accursed floating island?"

Then he turned away with clenched hands and flaming eyes, and lay in wait for Hazle, and with the heart of a human tiger burning within him.

When Hazle came out he pounced on him from behind, and laid his hand so fiercely on the young sailor's shoulder that he winced.

"Mr. Cassidy!"

"Devil!"

The eyes bursting with jealousy, the impassioned, furious face, the low, sibilant fierceness with which that one word was uttered, brought Fred up to the occasion in a moment.

"I don't understand you, sir."

"You don't, eh—with your baby, hypocritical face, and sneaking heart? You, who couldn't lie nor swear an oath—you, who call yourself the perfection of innocence—d—you, what do you mean by your conduct with Mrs. Elmhurst?"

Hazle's face turned from a ghastly white to scarlet.

"Mr. Cassidy, I don't understand you. You couple a lady's name with mine in—in—in——"

"Don't preach, curse you; look me in the face, if you can—like a man—tell me, did you kiss her?—ay, blush away—well you might; a cub like you daring to compromise an innocent woman—whom I love—whose life I have twice saved at the risk of my own. Hazle, swear to me you'll never go near her again—swear it!"

"Never—hear her first, then——"

But Hazle did not finish. Cassidy leaped at his throat and shook him with all his mad strength. Hazle's face began to blacken and his eyes to start.

"Have mercy!"

"Mercy to a reptile?" hissed the infuriated mate.

"Man alive, what are you doing? Avast!" roared the voice of Portquarter Jack, and the next instant he had

torn Cassidy away and hurled him ten feet from his victim, who fell heavily to the grass.

"Shame—oh, shame!" cried Mrs. Elmhurst, appearing on the scene. "What is this?"

Cassidy arose abashed, but sullen. The beautiful young woman had knelt by Fred, and was weeping over him.

Then Cassidy came forward, humble and penitent, and pleaded his cause—he was jealous. He had twice watched and nursed her back to life, he had dared to love her, and had dreamed of a future—

He stopped there. Mrs. Elmhurst had risen and confronted him.

"I owe you a deep debt of gratitude," she said; "I might once have received this avowal as an honor, though it would pain me; I am not a free agent; if I were, believe me, sir, I should not give a second thought to the love of a coward!" and her white, slender finger pointed to Fred, who had risen, pale and trembling.

That word struck Cassidy like a bullet; what would have followed who shall say, for at that moment they were all startled by a deep, ringing "boom."

A signal gun.

They looked at each other in speechless joy, amazement and doubt, when one of the men came rushing up, yelling:

"A sail—a sail!"

They seemed to have wings as well as legs, so swiftly did they all rush down to the shore.

Oh, what a vision met their gaze!

A vessel under reefed topsails and flying jib, almost at a standstill, with oblong specks in the ratlines that were presently observed to be men.

How Jack worked his arms like a windmill, and shouted and roared with the tears coursing down his furrowed cheeks, and Mrs. Elmhurst, with her boy at her breast, knelt and prayed.

They saw the vessel which had been lying broadside towards them, slew around, and steer for the island, but anchor a mile out, then a boat was lowered, and pulled rapidly to the shore.

A handsome young officer, with a downy mustache budding on his upper lip, leaped out of the boat, and approached the group.

Hazle was all eyes, and Portquarter Jack stood like a stuck pig with his mouth open.

"Stave in my port——"

"Uncle Jack!"

"Will!" cried Hazle.

"Fred—what is this?" answered the young officer, and threw himself into Fred's arms.

"Why, Merrymac, sir," spluttered Jack, noticing our hero's rank, "oh, stave in my—t'ain't no use—oh, you've come down from Heaven; G-G-God bless you! Boo-hoo!" and the sturdy old chap broke down.

Will went to him.

"Good Uncle Jack, tell me, are there any more of you?"

"No—no-o. This is all that's left of the *Andromeda*."

"Come, then, on board at once all of you;" then he turned away, and saw Mrs. Elmhurst looking at him.

"Ah, madame," he said, "you above all require our care. Give the boy to me, Mrs. Day."

She staggered as if she had been shot, and placed her hand to her heart.

"Whose—ship—is—that?"

"Partly mine, and partly another's."

"His name."

"Needham."

"And yet you have called me by my right name."

"To-morrow, madame, that shall be explained."

At sight of the waifs in the boat, the crew of the *Twilight* set up a deafening cheer, and Mrs. Needham, hearing there was a lady and child among them, came up too, and received them in tearful gladness.

"Fred," said Will, "here is the key of my stateroom.

Go to it, and remain there till I send for you. I'll show you the way."

Returning on deck, Will sent for Needham.

"You remember the little romance connected with the *Andromeda* and me?"

"About a certain young lady?"

"Yes."

"Quite well. Is that her with the little boy?"

"No. It is the young sailor—Hazle; arrange it with your wife. Tell her all."

Needham was about to turn away, when the steward approached.

"Lady castaway and Mrs. Needham wants party by the name of Hazle," he said.

"Right; she knows all!" cried Will, hurrying down.

That evening, as Cassidy and Portquarter Jack were on the poop, telling of their dreadful sufferings, three ladies came on deck.

One with short hair and an awkward gait.

Cassidy was dumbfounded and speechless.

"You understand now," said Mrs. Elmhurst to him, "why I let *him* kiss me."

"Good God, what have I done? Miss Hazle, forgive me. I was blind—blind!"

"So was I," grinned Portquarter Jack, "till Mrs. Elmhurst told me. What eyes them women have, Lord love 'em!"

* * * * *

Never was there a happier voyage back to New York than that one.

Mrs. Day, as we must call her now, had the news of her husband's death broken very gently to her, and she felt it bitterly now; her own trials had softened her heart towards him—alas, when it was too late!

Among his papers was a long and loving letter, sealed and addressed to her. It was a lover's vindication of his rash conduct, and showed that the fatal duel had not been without its just cause.

"Two fatal marriages," sighed the widow. "Ah, my love, Eddy, I shall be wedded to you for the rest of my life, with God's aid!"

Poor Cassidy.

EPILOGUE.

"RICA!"

"Yes, Will."

"You are going to the hotel with the ladies; let me beg you to accept this from your brother. You must dress, now."

"Oh, Will!"

"Nonsense! before long, dear Rica, it will be your right to share my possessions."

Rica blushed scarlet; then she went up to him.

"Will, dear."

"Speak, freely, Rica."

"I—am—unhappy about Mrs. Sulky."

"All right; I'll see to that," he answered, cheerfully. "I'll put matters right if they're wrong, never fear."

He was as good as his word.

Having accompanied the ladies to the Astor House, he then went alone to the old home of the Sulkys, intending to call in on his way to his mother.

There was little or no change in the home of the Sulkys.

Externally, it looked just the same.

A light was burning in the room, and Will went near enough to peep through the window.

He heard voices in angry discussion, and his heart leaped with joy at the sound of Mrs. Sulky's.

The window was open, and the first few hot words rooted Will to the spot.

"Don't come here with your lies! Who fired the shot? you did, you villain!"

"It is not so, I swear!"

"Don't deny it! God has avenged me! Look at your scarred face and withered arm; what is that? Retribution! Leave me, or look to it; there is yet time to hand you over to the law. Wretch, you have lost to me the only living creature I had in the world—Frederica—whom I shall never see again!"

Will waited to hear no more.

He pushed the door open, went in and entered the parlor, fully expecting to be confronted by Uriah Braintree.

He stopped in blank astonishment.

A tall, gaunt man, of doubtful age, stood in front of Mrs. Sulky.

He turned a face, lacerated and scarred so horribly as to be simply revolting; in addition to which one eye was gone, and the right arm, a mere withered, crooked stick, with cramped fingers, was bent across his breast.

At sight of Will he uttered a sharp cry.

"Merciful Heavens! Is it Uriah?" cried Will, aghast, and his heart melting.

"Yes," said Mrs. Sulky; "and see what his evil ways have brought him to. I know your voice, Will Merrymac; but you have changed; what of Fredrica?"

"She is in New York."

"Here—alive!" cried Mrs. Sulky, starting up.

"Here and well, Mrs. Sulky; rescued by us on an island in the Pacific, and only wanting your forgiveness."

"Mine—oh, William—mine! It is I who wants hers. Ah! you don't know how my long sickness changed me. I saw myself as I was—a harsh, ill-tempered, unreasonable beast; but the voice of God has reached me and cured my evil spirit. Take me to her—take me to her, my poor, ill-used girl!"

She flung herself on Will's breast and burst into tears.

It cost Will an effort to keep a dry eye.

"You shall go," he said.

"Ah, thank you—thank you; but she never need have fled from me. I saw who fired the shot. The pistol was not in her grasp when that murderous wretch pulled the trigger."

"Spare me!" whined Uriah. "Look at me, Mr Merrymac, and you, Mrs. Sulky. See what I've come to. Let me go in peace, and I'll leave these parts; think of my poor old mother."

And the poor, broken-down, crippled wretch sobbed aloud.

"Go!" said Will; "whatever brought such a fearful punishment upon you, God alone and yourself may know. For Miss Hazle's sake and Mrs. Sulky's, we will let the past lie buried. Go your way, and may your affliction help you to become a repentant and a better man. Go!"

The broken-down sinner crept away, still sobbing.

How fearfully had his last fiendish act recoiled upon himself; what I have described was the result of the boiling fat he had thrown over himself instead of the unsuspecting cook.

"Mrs. Sulky," said Will, "I long to see my mother; come with me to her."

"Readily; we often meet; she is a good woman, William. Yes, I will go."

"And stay there while I fetch Fredrica."

"Yes."

My young friends, can you not imagine the meeting between the widow and her only child—her long-absent, loving son.

Can you not imagine the joy with which noble, virtuous Fredrica went back to her foster mother, now so changed for the better.

Ah, there was happiness that day in the little home of the Merrymacs.

Mrs. Day did not contest her husband's will; she kept her word, and retired with her own family away from society and temptation, living on the memory of her two early loves, and the two husbands now gone into the Infinite.

Needham and Will prospered, and bought other vessels, and Will took command of one two years later.

That day Fredrica had become his wife, a sailor's bride, and with no fear of the sea, in spite of the dreadful sufferings and horrors passed through when "ADRIFT ON A FLOATING ISLAND."

[THE END.]

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